

Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



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Contents

Addresses and Remarks

See also Meetings With Foreign Leaders
Asian Pacific American Heritage Month—632
Emergency food aid programs—635
Missouri, national economy and a question-
and-answer session in Maryland Heights—
637
National Day of Prayer—630
National Volunteer Week—618
Radio address—603
Super Bowl champion New York Giants—625
Teachers of the Year, 2008 National and
State—622
U.S.-Brazil CEO Forum officials, meeting—
606
White House Correspondents' Association
dinner—604

Communications to Congress

Burma, message reporting on blocking
property and prohibiting certain
transactions—629
Supplemental appropriations for ongoing
military and intelligence operations and
selected other international activities, letter
transmitting—651

Executive Orders

Blocking Property and Prohibiting Certain
Transactions Related to Burma—628

Interviews With the News Media

News conference, April 29—606

Letters and Messages

Cinco de Mayo, message—650

Meetings With Foreign Leaders

Guatemala, President Colom—605
United Nations, Special Representative of the
U.N. Secretary-General for Afghanistan—
617

Proclamations

Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month—620
Jewish American Heritage Month—620
Law Day, U.S.A.—627
National Charter Schools Week—650
National Physical Fitness and Sports Month—
621

Statements by the President

Burma situation—636
North Korea Freedom Week—627
Student loans access legislation, congressional
passage—637
World Press Freedom Day—636

Supplementary Materials

Acts approved by the President—654
Checklist of White House press releases—653
Digest of other White House
announcements—651
Nominations submitted to the Senate—652

Editor's Note: The President was at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, on May 2, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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The President's Radio Address

April 26, 2008

Good morning. As we approach graduation season, many American students are looking forward to beginning college in the fall. This new chapter of life is a time of great expectation but can also be a time of anxiety. And that anxiety is being heightened by the recent credit crunch, which has raised concerns about the potential availability of student loans.

Recently, some lenders have dropped out of the Federal program that provides college loans to students who have often little or no credit. Without an adequate response, this means that many students may approach the upcoming school year uncertain of when they will be able to get their loans or where they will come from.

A slowdown in the economy shouldn't mean a downturn in educational opportunities. So we're taking decisive action now to ensure that college is accessible and affordable for students around the country.

One way we're helping is through the Department of Education's lender of last resort program, which works to provide loans for students who are unable to secure one from a lender. The Department is taking steps to ensure that the agencies involved in this program are ready and able to meet their responsibilities. If necessary, the Government will help fund these loans. With these actions, we will help ensure that a college education is not unnecessarily denied to those who have earned it.

These are important first steps, but more needs to be done. Congress needs to pass legislation that would give my administration greater authority to buy Federal student loans. By doing so, we can ensure that lenders will continue to participate in the guaranteed loan program and ensure that students continue to have access to tuition assistance.

A bill that would do this has already passed the House of Representatives. It is called the "Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act." This bill provides the necessary tools for safeguarding student loans without permanently expanding the Government's role in their financing. The authority the bill grants is temporary and would be used only if it became apparent there was a shortage of loans available to students.

Ensuring the stability of student loans is essential to keeping educational opportunities open to all Americans. Last year alone, Federal loans provided more than \$60 billion of aid to American students. This money helped pay for tuition, textbooks, and the lifetime of opportunity that comes with holding a college degree. Members of Congress now have a chance to preserve this opportunity, and they should take it.

I urge Congress to get the "Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act" to my desk as soon as possible. A delay of even a week or two may make it impossible for this legislation to help students going to school this fall. By working together to improve and enact this legislation quickly, we can ensure that higher education remains within the reach for all those who've earned it, and we can ensure that America's college students can spend more time next fall thinking about their textbooks than their pocketbooks.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:10 a.m. on April 25 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 26. In his address, the President referred to H.R. 5715, the "Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act of 2008." The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 25 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner

April 26, 2008

Thank you all. Thank you very much. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Please excuse me if I'm a little sleepy—3:00 a.m. this morning, the red phone rang. *[Laughter]* It was the damn wedding planner. *[Laughter]*

Two weeks from tonight is Jenna's wedding, so I'm a little wistful this evening. Plus, this is my last White House correspondents' dinner as President. You know, I'm not sure what I'm going to do next. After he left office, Vice President Gore won an Oscar and the Nobel Peace Prize. *[Laughter]* Hey, I don't know, I might win a prize—Publishing Clearinghouse or something. *[Laughter]*

But thanks for inviting me. Our entertainment tonight is Craig Ferguson. You know, this is a small world. Craig was once in a punk band called Bastards from Hell, which is what Dick and I are going to call our band. *[Laughter]* Craig is Scottish by birth; so is Barney. *[Laughter]* Two months ago, Craig became an American citizen. I'm honored to call you, fellow American.

Ladies and gentlemen, surprisingly, I've enjoyed these dinners. *[Laughter]* So tonight I thought we'd reminisce a bit. The first couple of years I came to this dinner, I was really into slide shows.

[At this point, a video was shown.]

Next year, a new President will be standing up here. I have to say, I'm kind of surprised we don't have more Presidential candidates here tonight—like any. *[Laughter]* Senator McCain is not here. He probably wanted to distance himself from me a little bit. *[Laughter]* You know, he's not alone. Jenna's moving out too. *[Laughter]*

The two Democratic candidates aren't here either. Senator Clinton couldn't get into the building because of sniper fire, and Senator Obama's at church. *[Laughter]*

But I'm sure whoever the next President is will show up at these dinners, especially like the dinners in 2005 and 2006, when we had a couple of surprises up our sleeves.

[A video was shown.]

We've had a lot of fun nights over the years. Do you remember the year I mentioned Ozzy Osbourne, and he stood up on a chair and blew me a kiss? *[Laughter]* So few leaders get that kind of experience. *[Laughter]* You know, I love the mixed crowds here. It's an interesting crowd. You know, just think—Pamela Anderson and Mitt Romney in the same room. *[Laughter]* Isn't that one of the signs of the apocalypse? *[Laughter]*

Which brings me to Dick—*[laughter]*—for 8 years as Vice President, Dick has ridden shotgun. That's probably not the best analogy. *[Laughter]* But he is a dear friend, and he's been the greatest straight man in the history of the world. *[Laughter]* Dick, I don't know what I would have done for material without you. *[Laughter]*

[A video was shown.]

What I like best about these evenings is the laughter and the chance to thank you for the work you do for the country. I also view this as a good chance to put aside our differences for a few hours.

And one thing we all share, whether we're native citizens or new citizens like Craig, is a tremendous appreciation for our people in uniform, an appreciation symbolized by the United States Marine Band, which is celebrating its 210th anniversary this year. I love the band, and so I'm going to say my farewell to you by doing something I've always wanted to do. And I do it in the spirit of our shared love for this country.

[The remarks concluded as President Bush conducted the United States Marine Band.]

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8 p.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers Craig Ferguson and Ozzy Osbourne; actress Pamela Anderson; and former Republican Presidential candidate Mitt Romney. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 28.

**Remarks Following a Discussion
With President Alvaro Colom
Caballeros of Guatemala**

April 28, 2008

President Bush. It's been my honor to welcome to the Oval Office the President and First Lady of a close friend of the United States. Mr. President, thank you for coming.

We've had a good discussion about a variety of issues. We discussed bilateral relations between Guatemala and the United States, which are very strong. We are friends. We treat each other with respect. Our objective is—with U.S. foreign policy—is to have a neighborhood that is peaceful and prosperous, where social justice is important; want to achieve social justice through good health policy, good education policy, and good judicial policy. The United States is pleased to help this Government, as best as we possibly can, help the average citizen get a good education and have good health care.

We talked about how CAFTA is working. Exports to the United States have increased; exports from the United States have increased. And that's good.

We talked about security and the need for the region—Mexico, the United States, and the countries of Central America—to fight drug trafficking. I told the President that we are working hard to reduce demand for drugs here in America. And at the same time, we want to work in conjunction with strong leaders to make sure these drug traffickers don't get a stronghold. And that's why it's very important for Congress to fund the Merida project.

We talked about the reforms that the Government is instituting inside of Guatemala, including tax reform and reform to make sure that people who break the law are held to account.

I was particularly pleased to note that the Guatemalan Government and its leadership is promoting laws to make sure women are treated well and that violence against women is prosecuted.

And so—and we're going to talk a little later on about the Millennium Challenge Account. And by the way, we were talking about blueberries, and—so that blueberries are able to come off-season here to the United

States, which is a positive development for Guatemalan farmers.

And finally, of course, the President brought up the issue of immigration. And he wanted to urge me to think about TPS—TPS for citizens, as well as comprehensive immigration reform. I assured him that I will consider his request. And I assured him that I believe comprehensive immigration reform is in our Nation's best interests.

And so we've had a good discussion, and right after this press availability, I'll be taking he and the First Lady to lunch. And I'm looking forward to serving them lunch, and I bet you're looking forward to eating lunch. [Laughter] Thanks for coming.

President Colom. I want to thank President Bush for his hospitality. We've spent a couple of days working here, and we are very happy to hold this meeting in which we have discussed strengthening our relationship with an—already a strong relationship, in fact.

We discussed, as the President mentioned, the fight against drug trafficking. We are doing everything necessary to eliminate drug trafficking and drug traffickers from our territory.

We discussed the issue of social investment. We have received support from USAID. We—our two countries have common aims in this regard.

We also discussed the issue of our migrants. We brought up TPS with the President. We will be awaiting a response on that.

We described our recent tax reform to the President. That is something we're starting in Guatemala because we need to ensure that we have the public funds to be able to carry out the reforms in the areas of social justice and others that we have discussed.

We want to express our appreciation for the support that we have received from the United States to combat drug trafficking. Recently, we received four helicopters. This has been extremely helpful to us. We've also achieved good success on this front with the recent cocaine seizures. In fact, an operation was just carried out last night, a very large one, very successful. And on that, we are working not just with the United States but also with Mexico and the entire neighborhood in Central America, because all of us

must be involved, as President Bush said, in order to combat that scourge at all levels.

And so we are very happy to be here and very happy to be moving forward. Thank you.

President Bush. *Gracias, señor.*

President Colom. *Si. Gracias.*

President Bush. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:41 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sandra Torres de Colom, wife of President Colom. President Colom spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With U.S.-Brazil CEO Forum Officials

April 28, 2008

It is my honor to welcome the U.S.-Brazil CEO Forum here to Washington. First of all, I want to thank my friend President Lula for encouraging this forum to go forward. It's an indication of the importance that we both place on our bilateral relations. Brazil is a very powerful, very important country in our neighborhood. And it's really important for this administration and future administrations to work closely with the Brazilian Government, like it is important for our respective business communities to work closely together.

I do want to thank you all very much for putting forward a list of recommendations. I'm looking forward to our discussion. As I understand, the list of recommendations includes a successful Doha round as well as a bilateral tax treaty and a bilateral investment treaty. One of the things I will share with the Brazilian CEOs is that I strongly support a successful Doha round, and our Government will work closely with Brazil to get that done. And secondly, in terms of our bilateral policy, I also strongly, as does my administration, support a bilateral tax treaty and a bilateral investment treaty.

I'm—relations between our two countries are very positive, and they're very important. And so thank you all for coming. Please give my best regards to President Lula. Thank you for being here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:57 p.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil.

The President's News Conference

April 29, 2008

The President. Thank you. Good morning. This is a tough time for our economy. Across our country, many Americans are understandably anxious about issues affecting their pocketbook, from gas and food prices to mortgage and tuition bills. They're looking to their elected leaders in Congress for action. Unfortunately, on many of these issues, all they're getting is delay.

Americans are concerned about energy prices, and I can understand why. I think the last time I visited with you it was like—I said it was like a tax increase on the working people. The past 18 months, gas prices have gone up by \$1.40 per gallon. Electricity prices for small business and families are rising as well.

I've repeatedly submitted proposals to help address these problems. Yet time after time, Congress chose to block them. One of the main reasons for high gas prices is that global oil production is not keeping up with growing demand. Members of Congress have been vocal about foreign governments increasing their oil production. Yet Congress has been just as vocal in opposition to efforts to expand our production here at home.

They've repeatedly blocked environmentally safe exploration in ANWR. The Department of Energy estimates that ANWR could allow America to produce about a million additional barrels of oil every day, which translates to about 27 millions of gallons of gasoline and diesel every day. That would be about a 20-percent increase of oil—crude oil production over U.S. levels, and it would likely mean lower gas prices. And yet such efforts to explore in ANWR have been consistently blocked.

Another reason for high gas prices is the lack of refining capacity. It's been more than 30 years since America built its last new refinery. Yet in this area too, Congress has repeatedly blocked efforts to expand capacity and build more refineries.

As electricity prices rise, Congress continues to block provisions needed to increase domestic electricity production by expanding the use of clean, safe nuclear power. Instead, many of the same people in Congress who complain about high energy costs support legislation that would make energy even more expensive for our consumers and small businesses.

Congress is considering bills to raise taxes on domestic energy production, impose new and costly mandates on producers, and demand dramatic emissions cuts that would shut down coal plants and increase reliance on expensive natural gas. That would drive up prices even further. The cost of these actions would be passed on to consumers in the form of even higher prices at the pump and even bigger electric bills.

Instead of increasing costs and imposing new roadblocks to domestic energy production, Congress needs to clear away obstacles to more affordable, more reliable energy here at home.

Americans are concerned about rising food prices. Unfortunately, Congress is considering a massive, bloated farm bill that would do little to solve the problem. The bill Congress is now considering would fail to eliminate subsidy payments to multimillionaire farmers. America's farm economy is thriving. The value of farmland is skyrocketing, and this is the right time to reform our Nation's farm policies by reducing unnecessary subsidies. It's not the time to ask American families who are already paying more in the checkout line to pay more in subsidies for wealthy farmers. Congress can reform our farm programs, and should, by passing a fiscally responsible bill that treats our farmers fairly and does not impose new burdens on American taxpayers.

Americans are concerned about making their mortgage payments and keeping their homes, and I don't blame them. Last year, I called on Congress to pass legislation that would help address problems in the housing market. This includes critical legislation that would modernize the Federal Housing Administration, reform Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and allow State housing agencies to issue tax-free bonds to refinance subprime loans. Yet they failed to send a sin-

gle one of these proposals to my desk. Americans should not have to wait any longer for their elected officials to pass legislation to help more families stay in their homes.

Americans are concerned about the availability of student loans. The recent credit crunch makes it uncertain that some students will be able to get the loans they need. My administration is taking action through the Department of Education's lender of last resort program, which works to arrange loans for students who are unable to secure one from a lender on their own. In other words, we're helping. Congress needs to do more by passing a bill that would temporarily give the Federal Government greater authority to buy Federal student loans. This authority would safeguard student loans without permanently expanding the Government's role in their financing.

In all these issues, the American people are looking to their leaders to come together and act responsibly. I don't think this is too much to ask, even in an election year. My administration will reach out to Congress. We will work to find areas of agreement so that we can deal with the economic pressures that our American taxpayers and American families are feeling. I ask Congress to do its part by sending me sensible and effective bills that I can sign, instead of issuing or sending bills that simply look like political statements. We can work together. We can help Americans weather this difficult period. We can keep our country moving forward.

Now I'll be glad to take some of your questions. Jennifer [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press].

National Economy/Energy

Q. Thank you, sir. You have said that we need to wait until the first stimulus has taken effect to act again. But since it was passed, gas prices have gone up, foreclosures have gone up, there have been layoffs, news just this morning that consumer confidence is down yet again.

President Bush. Yes.

Q. Isn't it time to think about doing more?

And on another issue, would you support a summer moratorium on the Federal gas tax?

The President. First of all, the money is just now making it into people's bank accounts. And I applaud the Speaker and the leader of the Senate and minority leaders there for working together to get this done. And now, after a period of time, the money is beginning to arrive, and we'll see what the effects are.

And we'll look at any idea in terms of energy, except I will tell you this: That if Congress is truly interested in solving the problem, they can send the right signal by saying, we're going to explore for oil and gas in the U.S. territories, starting with ANWR. We can do so in an environmentally friendly way. They ought to say, why don't we—I proposed, you might remember, taking some abandoned military bases and providing regulatory relief so we can build new refineries. I mean, if we're generally interested in moving forward with an energy policy that sends a signal to the world that we're not—we're going to try to become less reliant upon foreign oil, we can explore at home as well as continue on with an alternative fuels program.

Yes, sir.

National Economy/Energy/Oil Supply

Q. So was that a yes on the moratorium?

The President. No. I'm going to look at everything they propose. We'll take a look.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Were you premature in saying that the U.S. economy is not in a recession when food and energy prices are soaring so high?

And what more can you do to persuade Saudi Arabia during your upcoming visit to reconsider output levels and cut prices?

The President. Yes. Look, I mean, you know, the words on how to define the economy don't reflect the anxiety the American people feel. The average person doesn't really care what we call it. The average person wants to know whether or not we know that they're paying higher gasoline prices and that they're worried about staying in their homes. And I do understand that. That's why we've been aggressively helping people refinance their homes. That's why I continue to call upon Congress to pass legislation that will enable people to stay in their homes.

These are tough times. People—economists can argue over the terminology. But—and these are difficult times, and the American people know it. And they want to know whether or not Congress knows it. I think an important signal to send on energy, just like I said, is to say, okay, we're going to go find oil here at home.

We can—we're transitioning to a new era, by the way, a new era where we're going to have batteries in our cars that will power—enable people to drive 40 miles on electricity. There's going to be more ethanol on the market, more alternative fuels. It would be—our driving habits will change. But in the meantime, we need to be sending a signal to the world markets that we intend to explore here in America. We can also send a clear signal that we understand supply and demand. And then when you don't build a refinery for 30 years, it's going to be a part of restricting supply, and therefore, we ought to expand our refining capacity by permitting new refineries and getting after it quickly.

On the electricity front, as you know, I'm a big believer in nuclear power. Except we keep getting mixed signals out of Congress, and the regulatory system sends mixed signals.

And so—and then to your question on the Saudis, look, I have made the case that the high price of oil injures economies. But I think we better understand that there's not a lot of excess capacity in this world right now. Hopefully high prices will spur more exploration to bring excess capacity on, but demand is rising faster than supply. And that's why you're seeing global energy prices rise. And that's why it's important for us to try to take the pressure off by saying, we're going to start exploring here at home.

John [John Yang, NBC News].

Alternative Fuel Sources/Price of Food

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to ask you about an area—

The President. You're welcome.

Q. —where food prices and energy policy come together; that's biofuels.

The President. Yes.

Q. The World Bank says about 85 percent of the increase in corn price since 2002 is due to biofuel—increased demand for

biofuels. And your Secretary of State said that—indicated yesterday that she thought that might be part of the problem. Do you agree with that? And what can the United States do—what more can the United States do to help make food more affordable around the world?

The President. Yes, actually, I have a little different take. I thought it was 85 percent of the world's food prices are caused by weather, increased demand, and energy prices—just the cost of growing product—and that 15 percent has been caused by ethanol—or the arrival of ethanol.

By the way, the high price of gasoline is going to spur more investment in ethanol as an alternative to gasoline. And the truth of the matter is, it's in our national interests that we—our farmers grow energy as opposed to us purchasing energy from parts of the world that are unstable or may not like us.

In terms of the international situation, we are deeply concerned about food prices here at home, and we're deeply concerned about people who don't have food abroad. In other words, scarcity is of concern to us. Last year, we were very generous in our food donations, and this year, we'll be generous as well. As a matter of fact, we just released about \$200 million out of the Emerson Trust as part of an ongoing effort to address scarcity.

One thing I think that would be—I know would be very creative policy is if we would buy food from local farmers as a way to help deal with scarcity, but also as a way to put in place an infrastructure so that nations can be self-sustaining and self-supporting. It's a proposal I put forth that Congress hasn't responded to yet, and I sincerely hope they do.

That would be Jim [Jim Axelrod, CBS News].

Price of Gasoline/National Economy/ 2008 Presidential Election

Q. Good morning, Mr. President. Thank you. I just want to follow up on the idea of the gas tax moratorium, if I may, because you're indicating that, perhaps, you'd be open to it. You mentioned in your opening remarks that—

The President. I'm open to any ideas, and we'll analyze everything that comes our way, but go ahead.

Q. Well, we're talking about, perhaps, the most immediate relief to people who are buying gasoline every day, because it would be an 18.4 cents a gallon tax cut. Senator Clinton and Senator McCain are in favor of it; Senator Obama is not.

The President. Yes.

Q. But Americans are hearing about this every day. So could you flesh out, perhaps, some of your thinking about why this would be a good idea or not, why you would agree with Senator McCain or Senator Obama?

The President. No, I appreciate you trying to drag me in the '08 race. And this is the first attempt to do so, and I can understand why you would want to do that.

I will tell you that, first of all, the American people have got to understand that here in the White House, we are concerned about high gasoline prices. We're concerned about high food prices. We're concerned about people staying in their homes. And we're concerned about student loans, just like I described. And Congress can be helpful. Congress—they can show leadership by dealing with these issues.

And we'll consider interesting ideas. But, Jim, what I'm not going to do is jump right in the middle of a Presidential campaign. We'll let the candidates argue out their ideas.

Q. Well, would—

The President. I just told you, I'll consider the ideas. If it's a good idea, we embrace it; if not, we're analyzing the different ideas coming forward.

Wendell [Wendell Goler, FOX News Channel].

Alternative Fuel Sources/Energy

Q. Mr. President, you just said there's not a lot of excess supply out there. Some energy experts think we may have already passed or be within a couple of years of passing the maximum oil pumping capability. In other words, we may be close to tapping all we've got. Do you think that's the case? And if you do, why haven't you put more resources into renewable energy research, sir?

The President. Wendell, we've put a lot into ethanol. And we're—as a matter of fact,

the solution to the issue of corn-fed ethanol is cellulosic ethanol, which is a fancy word for saying we're going to make ethanol out of switchgrasses or wood chips. And we're spending a lot of money along those lines.

But energy policy needs to be comprehensive. And we got to understand, we're in a transition period. The problem is, there's been a lot of focus by the Congress in the intermediate steps and in the long-term steps—the long-term steps being hydrogen; the intermediate steps being biofuels, for example, and researching the biofuels and battery technology—but not enough emphasis on the here and now.

And so you ask—you say that people think we can't—there's not any more reserves to be found. Well, there are reserves to be found in ANWR. That's a given. I just told you that there's about 27 million gallons of diesel and gasoline that could be—from domestically produced crude oil that's not being utilized. And not only that, we can explore in environmentally friendly ways. New technologies enables for—to be able to drill like we've never been able to do so before—slant hole technologies and the capacity to use a drill site, a single drill site, to be able to explore a field in a way that doesn't damage the environment. And yet this is a litmus test issue for many in Congress. Somehow if you mention ANWR, it means you don't care about the environment. Well, I'm hoping now people, when they say ANWR, means you don't care about the gasoline prices that people are paying.

Yes, sir. Rog [Roger Runnigen, Bloomberg News].

Strategic Petroleum Reserve

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, and good morning.

The President. Good morning. [Laughter] I like a friendly guy here in the Rose Garden.

Q. Sir, 14—

The President. Would that be you, Rog, a friendly guy here in the Rose Garden? [Laughter]

Q. Thank you.

The President. Yes. Mr. Sunshine, they call you. [Laughter]

Q. Fourteen Senators, including your own Senator, Kay Bailey Hutchison from Texas, calling on you to stop filling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. You've been asked that several times over the past few years.

The President. Yes.

Q. I know what your answer has been. But do you think now, with the rising prices, the record high oil prices, it's time to change course?

The President. In this case, I have analyzed the issue. And I don't think it would affect price, for this reason: We're buying, at the moment, about 67,000 to 68,000 barrels of oil per day, fulfilling statutory obligations to fill up the SPRo. World demand is 85 million barrels a day. So the purchases for SPRo account for one-tenth of one percent of global demand. And I don't think that's going to affect price, when you affect one-tenth of one percent. And I do believe it is in our national interests to get the SPRo filled in case there's a major disruption of crude oil around the world.

I mean, one of the—for example, one of the things the—Al Qaida would like to do is blow up oil facilities. Understanding we're in a global market, a attack on an oil facility in a major oil exporting country would affect the economies of their enemy—that would be us and other people who can't stand what Al Qaida stands for. And therefore, the SPRo is necessary, if that's the case, to be able to deal with that kind of contingency. And if I thought it would affect the price of oil positively, I'd seriously consider it. But when you're talking about one-tenth of one percent of global demand, I think the—if you—on a cost-benefit analysis, I don't think you get any benefits from making the decision. I do think it costs you oil in the case of a national security risk.

Martha [Martha Raddatz, ABC News].

Afghanistan/War on Terror

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to switch to Afghanistan. There was another attempt on President Karzai's life. There are operations going on there right now. Is the strategy succeeding? Are we winning in Afghanistan?

The President. Yes, I think we're making progress in Afghanistan, but there's a very

resilient enemy that obviously wants to kill people that stand in the way of their reimp-osition of a state that is—which vision is incredibly dark. I mean, it's very important for the American people to remember what life was like in Afghanistan prior to the liberation of the country. We had a government in place that abused people's human rights. They didn't believe in women's rights. They didn't let little girls go to school. And they provided safe haven to Al Qaida. In the liberation of this country, we've achieved some very important strategic objectives: denying Al Qaida safe haven from which to plot and plan attacks and replacing this repressive group with a young democracy.

And it's difficult in Afghanistan. I mean, it's—if you know the history of the country, you understand it's hard to go from the kind of society in which they had been living to one in which people are now responsible for their own behavior. But I am pleased with a lot of things. One, I'm pleased with the number of roads that have been built. I'm pleased with the number of schools that have opened up. I'm pleased a lot of girls, young girls are going to school. I'm pleased health clinics are now being distributed around the country. I'm pleased with the Afghan Army; that when they're in the fight, they're good.

I wish we had completely eliminated the radicals who kill innocent people to achieve objectives, but that hasn't happened yet. And so I think it's very much in our interests to continue helping the young democracy, and we will.

Yes. Obviously you've got a followup.

Q. But do you think we're winning? Do you think we're winning?

The President. I do. I think we're making good progress. I do, yes.

Q. Can I just add to that? A couple of weeks ago—

The President. No, you can't. This is the second followup. You usually get one followup, and I was nice enough to give you one. I didn't give anybody on this side a followup, and now you are trying to take a second followup.

Q. They didn't try.

The President. I know you try.

Yes.

Q. Can I just say that—

The President. No, they just cut off your mike. You can't, no.

Q. A couple of weeks ago, you said—

The President. Now she's going to go without the mike. This is awesome. [Laughter]

Q. A couple of weeks ago, you said that in Iraq, in 2006, you said we were winning and the strategy was working to keep up troop morale.

The President. Yes.

Q. How can we believe that you're not doing the same thing here?

The President. Oh, you tried to ask me that question before. It's a repeat. Look, I said—

Q. No, I'm talking—

The President. Can I finish, please? The question you asked me before at the exclusive I gave you on the ranch was, "You said that we were winning in the past." I also said that there was tough fighting. Now, make sure you put the comments in place.

So what I'm going to tell you now is, we're making progress in Afghanistan, but there's tough fighting. I'm under no illusions that this isn't tough. I know full well we're dealing with a determined enemy. I believe it's in our interest that we defeat that enemy. And so, yes, we're making progress, but it's also a tough battle. We're facing people who are willing to strap bombs on themselves and walk into places where the innocent dwell or the innocent shop and kill them.

Is it in our interest to confront these people now, whether it be in Afghanistan or Iraq or Europe or anywhere else? And the answer is, absolutely, it's in our interest. And the notion that somehow we can let these people just kind of have their way, or, you know, let's don't stir them up, is naive or disingenuous, and it's not in our Nation's interests. We are in a global struggle against thugs and killers. And the United States of America has got to continue to take the lead.

And so in Afghanistan, yes, we're making progress. Does that mean that we're—that it's over? No, it doesn't mean it's over. We're in a long struggle, as I've told you many a time, against these jihadists. You defeat them, ultimately, by the advance of democracy. See, this is an ideological struggle.

These aren't isolated, kind of, law enforcement moments. We're dealing with a group of ideologues who use asymmetrical warfare—that means killing innocent people—to try to achieve their objectives. And one objective is to drive us out of Afghanistan, Iraq, the Middle East, or anywhere else where we try to confront them.

And so, yes—I mean, look, is it tough? Yes, it's tough. Is it difficult? Absolutely. Is it worth the fight? In my judgment, yes, it is.

Yes, ma'am.

Syria/North Korea/Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. What is the impact—[*inaudible*]?

The President. I can't hear you too well. Sorry, got a flawed mike. Martha, what did you do to the mike? [*Laughter*]

Q. Thank you, sir.

The President. She wanted an exclusive again. Anyway. [*Laughter*]

Q. Mr. President, thank you, sir. And previously, when asked about Israel's September bombing of the Syrian facility, you refused aggressively to discuss it. Then suddenly last week, your administration released classified photos and details of that bombing, intelligence officials claiming that it showed that this facility was a North Korean-designed nuclear facility being actually built with the help of Pyongyang. Why the turnaround, sir? What did you hope that that would accomplish? And what do you say to lawmakers of both parties on Capitol Hill who are quite concerned that, indeed, if this was what this facility was, that it took some 8 months for you to inform them, sir?

The President. Thank you. Let me correct the record. We briefed 22 Members of Congress on what I'm about to tell you. First, we were concerned that an early disclosure would increase the risk of a confrontation in the Middle East or retaliation in the Middle East. And as I mentioned to you early on, we did notify 22 Members of Congress, key committee chairmen. And I was—I'm mindful that there was going to be this kind of reaction. And we—of course, we wanted to include more Members of Congress at a time when we felt the risk of retaliation or confrontation in the Middle East was reduced.

And so that moment came upon us and then extended the briefings.

We also wanted to advance certain policy objectives through the disclosures. And one would be to the North Koreans, to make it abundantly clear that we may know more about you than you think, and therefore, it's essential that you have a complete disclosure on not only your plutonium activities but proliferation as well as enrichment activities.

And then we have an interest in sending a message to Iran, and the world for that matter, about just how destabilizing a—nuclear proliferation would be in the Middle East, and that it's essential that we work together to enforce U.N. Security Council resolutions aimed at getting Iran to stop their enrichment programs. In other words, one of the things that this example shows is that these programs can exist, and people don't know about them and—because the Syrians simply didn't declare the program. They had a hidden program.

And finally, we wanted to make it clear to Syria, and the world, that their intransigence in dealing with—helping us in Iraq or destabilizing Lebanon or dealing with Hamas—which is a destabilizing force in our efforts to have a Palestinian state coexist peacefully with Israel—that those efforts are—it gives us a chance to remind the world that we need to work together to deal with those issues. So that's why we made the decision we made.

Yes, sir.

Congress/Legislative Priorities

Q. Mr. President, you've expressed frustration with Congress, obviously, over the economic—wanting them to do more on the economy. They've blocked you on Colombia. They've blocked you on the FISA issue. Are you frustrated? Are you angry? And do you have any real hope of being able to work with this Congress this year?

The President. Yes. I am—I believe that they're letting the American people down, is what I believe. The—on the FISA issue, it is hard to believe that it's okay to pass the Protect America Act in August of 2007, and that act—and that people in Congress can't—don't believe that act is relevant in 2008. I mean, the act was set to expire; it

did. And yet this threat hasn't gone away. And I can only—it's either lack of leadership or a lack of understanding of the issue. And either way, it's not good for the country. We need to make sure our professionals have the tools to protect the American people from attack.

The Colombia free trade agreement—this economy is—as I mentioned to you, it's a sour time. It's tough for the American people. And yet the Colombia free trade agreement would benefit our economy. And the reason why is, is that many goods from Colombia come into our country duty free. And yet our goods going to Colombia are taxed through tariff. And the American people expect the President and the Congress to at least insist that a foreign country treat us the way we treat them. And in this case, the benefits will be more exports, more midsize and small businesses exporting into Colombia. About 9,000 exporters into Colombia today; 8,000 are midsize and small businesses. And when you can export more, it helps the economy. And one of the bright lights of the economy has been the amount of exports going overseas.

So rather than playing politics or whatever rationale that they have made for Colombia, they ought to be saying, this is good for our economy; it's good for workers; it's good for small businesses.

And so I'm perplexed, I guess is the best way to describe it, about why there's no action, inactivity on big issues. And—because the two issues you mentioned—FISA, protecting America; and Colombia, protecting America's economy by encouraging growth—are important to people whether they be Republicans, Democrats, or Independents.

Sheryl [Sheryl Gay Stolberg, New York Times].

National Economy/Energy/Taxes

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. You're welcome.

Q. I'm still waiting for my exclusive at the ranch.

The President. Yes. [Laughter]

Q. Mr. President, today I'm—[laughter].

The President. I'm at a loss for words. If only you'd have been at the White House

Correspondents' dinner, I would have invited you. [Laughter] Anyway, please, go ahead.

Q. Well said.

The President. It's an inside joke, for everybody listening. [Laughter]

Q. Mr. President, you have spoken today about opening ANWR for drilling and also refineries. But these are clearly long-term solutions to the problem of rising gas prices. What can you tell Americans about what your administration is doing in the short term?

And secondly, have you been briefed on tomorrow's GDP numbers, and are you concerned—

The President. No, I haven't been.

Q. Okay—and are you concerned that they will show us to officially be in a recession?

The President. I think they'll show that we're—it's a very slow economy. I can't guess what the number will be, and I haven't been shown, truly.

And by the way, opening up ANWR is not long term; it's intermediate term. But it sends a clear signal, is what it does. It sends a clear signal to the markets that the United States is not going to restrict exploration; the United States is going to encourage exploration.

And in the meantime, we have done—increasing CAFTA, for example. But the market's going to do as much for encouraging conservation as anything else is now. And so I firmly believe that—you know, if there was a magic wand to wave, I'd be waving it, of course. It's—I strongly believe it's in our interest that we reduce gas prices—gasoline prices. I mean, it would be like a major tax cut for people. And—

Q. But what—

The President. But let me finish, please, Sheryl. Strike one on the exclusive. [Laughter] Excuse me, strike two. [Laughter]

That—you made me lose my train of thought, of course. Maybe that's what you were attempting to do. No, I think that if there was a magic wand and say, okay, drop price, I'd do that. And so part of this is to make—set the psychology right that says to the world, we're not going to become more beholden on your oil; we're going to open up and be aggressive and have an aggressive energy policy. Secondly, we're going to be—

send the signal we're going to be building new refineries.

But there is no magic wand to wave right now. It took us awhile to get to this fix. That's why I told you that if Congress had responded—as a matter of fact, Congress did pass ANWR in the late 1990s—I mean, 1990s—and the 1990s—1990s, but it didn't go forward. And it's in my considered judgment, given the technological advances, to say, this is—we'll destroy the environment is just—I don't think it's an accurate statement.

And so I think it's very important, Sheryl, for Congress. The other thing Congress can do, if you want to send a good signal during these uncertain times, is make the tax cuts permanent, is to let people—send the signal that people are going to be able to keep their money. And I think that will help the psychology of the country.

Yes, Mark [Mark Knoller, CBS Radio].

Hamas/Situation in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President, do you feel——

The President. Yes, you can use a mike.

Q. Do you feel your foreign policy in the Middle East has been undermined by Jimmy Carter's meeting with Hamas leaders? What harm does it do for him to have met with Hamas leaders?

The President. No. Foreign policy and peace is undermined by Hamas in the Middle East. They're the ones who are undermining peace. They're the ones whose foreign policy objective is the destruction of Israel. They're the ones who are trying to create enough violence to stop the advance of the two-party state solution. They are a significant problem to world peace—or Middle Eastern peace.

And that's the reason I'm not talking to them. And that's the reason why—it's just important for people to understand that this is a—we're in a—we're witnessing a struggle between those who understand liberty and believe in the advance of liberty and those who want to stop the advance of liberty. And Hamas has made their position very clear.

Unfortunately, they're getting help. In Syria, they get help. There's rumors about Iranian help. And these countries that I just named are—take, for example, Lebanon. I

talked to Prime Minister Siniora today. Here's a struggling democracy in the heart of the Middle East that is—whose internal politics are being influenced by Syria, Hizballah—as a result of Iranian influence with Hizballah, all aiming to destabilize the country, which should be a clear signal about the intents of—the intentions of groups like Hizballah and Hamas.

And so when you want to talk about peace being difficult in the Middle East, it's going to be difficult. But it's even made more difficult by entities like Hamas, who insist upon lobbing rockets into Israel, trying to provoke response and trying to destabilize—even destabilize the region more.

And anybody can talk to who they want, but I just want the people to understand that the problem is Hamas. And until Hamas changes or until there's a competing vision in the Middle East for President Abbas, Prime Minister Fayyad to offer to the Palestinian people, that's all the more reason to try to define a state. And that's why I'm going to the Middle East, besides going to the 60th anniversary of Israel.

Yes, Ann [Ann Compton, ABC News].

Hamas/Middle East Peace Process

Q. Thank you, sir. Did any good come out of President Carter's talks with Hamas? And did anyone in your administration ask him not to do it? And will it have any impact on your trip to the Middle East?

The President. I didn't talk to him, and I don't know. I don't know what the conversations were, and I don't see Hamas changing. It's up to Hamas to change. And you get these meetings with these people, and they say one thing and do another. And this is the way it's been now for 7½ years in this administration, watching Hamas be a destabilizing influence.

And I supported the elections, by the way. And curiously enough, they won the elections against Fatah because they ran on a non-corruption campaign. The sad situation is, now they've been given power, they haven't delivered for the people in Gaza.

And my mission is to—when I go to the Middle East—is to continue to work with both Israelis and President Abbas and his

Government on a variety of fronts: one, coming up with the vision, helping them find the common ground on the vision; but also working with the Israelis to empower the Palestinians in the West Bank to be more in charge of security, to have less obstacles with which to deal with, to help the Palestinians with economic vitality and growth. There's some very interesting initiatives that are being developed there.

I'm still hopeful we'll get an agreement by the end of my Presidency. Condi is heading back out there. I've been in touch with President Abbas here in the Oval Office, and I talk to Prime Minister Olmert, and the attitude is good. People do understand the importance of getting a state defined.

But Hamas is—look, when you're Israel and you've got people lobbing rockets into your country, you're going to take care of business. But you got to ask, why is Hamas lobbing rockets? And one reason why is because they're trying to destabilize and create chaos and confusion. And to answer whether or not the people's conversations with them were more effective, all we got to do is watch and see how Hamas behaves.

Richard [Richard Wolf, USA Today].

Congressional Action on Supplemental Appropriations/Veterans' Benefits

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Congress is preparing to add a couple of things to your supplemental spending request for Iraq. And I'm wondering, some of these seem like things you could support: extending unemployment benefits and, particularly, additional help for Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans in terms of educational benefits. Are these things you might agree to, even though you have set a \$108 billion ceiling on the package?

The President. Richard, 108 is 108. And I made my position very clear to Congress, and I will not accept a supplemental over 108 or a supplemental that micromanages the war, ties the hands of our commanders.

We will work with Congress and—on these veterans' benefits. I'm a firm believer that we ought to treat our veterans with respect. In the State of the Union, I talked about the idea of transferring—a soldier being able to transfer educational benefits to spouse or

children. We've sent legislation to that effect up to Congress; we would like for them to move on it quickly. But the 108 is 108.

Michael [Michael Allen, Politico].

2008 Presidential Election/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I wonder if there's a big, urgent problem facing the country, coming down the road, that you worry your successor will neglect or postpone. That is, when the politics are done, after the war on terror, what do you think should be at the top of the list of the person who moves into that office?

The President. Yes. I don't think John McCain is going to neglect the war on terror, and I do think he'll be the President. Here I am interjecting myself in the '08 campaign, just like I told you I wouldn't. That's unfair, isn't it?

He—it's very important for the President to understand that America is still in danger of attack and that we're dealing in—with an ideological struggle that can only be solved with the spread of liberty. And a concern of mine, as you've heard me say, is that the Nation has had the tendency, in the past, to become isolationist and correspondingly protectionist. And I would hope whoever the President is—and I do believe it will be John—will be willing to resist the impulse, the temptation to say, well, it's not worth it anymore to confront an enemy; it's not worth it to try to do the hard work of helping democracies thrive and succeed. Because not only is it worth it; we will succeed in laying the foundation for peace if we have faith in the capacity of liberty to be transformative.

I'm also concerned about protectionism. This lad right here asked me about Congress's intransigence on Colombia. I think it reflects the fact that there is a strong protectionist sentiment in the United States. People—good people—believe it is not in our interest to be opening up markets. You might remember the CAFTA trade vote. We won by one vote, and it was a tough vote to get. And now the Speaker pulled a unique maneuver to stop the Colombia from moving forward. And it's a sign of—that the country is losing its confidence, to a certain extent;

that protectionist policy is better than confidently trading and treating unfairness in the marketplace.

And so my worry—not worry—my hope is, is that whoever the President is understands that America is a force for good in the world; that we’re—that in the spread of liberty, we’re adhering to a universal value—it’s not an American value; it’s a universal value—the notion of liberty. And you’ve heard me say it a lot. I do believe it’s a gift from the Almighty to every man, woman, and child. And if you believe in that and act on that, you’re really acting on a platform of peace, because ultimately, liberty yields the peace you want. It’s transformative and powerful. And I believe that people will be making a mistake if they say, we can’t compete economically, and therefore, let’s throw up walls. And yet the tendencies here in America are pretty strong right now.

There’s a lot of concern around the world, by the way, about America’s retreat. They’re wondering whether or not America is going to remain a leader. They’re wondering whether or not, for example, will capital be welcomed back into our country. And so it’s the “isms” that bother me—isolationism and protectionism.

April [April Ryan, American Urban Radio Networks].

National Economy/Zimbabwe

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Yes. You’re looking good in yellow.

Q. Thank you.

The President. How’s the baby?

Q. She’s good.

The President. Good. Yes.

Q. Thank you. You’re trying to get me off.

The President. No.

Q. But it’s okay.

The President. Is it true you named her Georgia?

Q. No. Is that okay with you?

The President. It’s your baby. [Laughter]

Q. Anyway, moving on to the subject of the day, I talked to James Clyburn before this press conference. He said, “As a man thinketh, so are we.” And Americans believe we are in a recession. What will it take for

you to say those words, that we are in a recession?

And also on Zimbabwe, what’s the next step? And does South Africa play a part in that?

The President. Yes, thank you. I’ve answered my—the question on the words and terminologies. I will tell you that these are very difficult economic times—very difficult. And we’ll let the economists define it for what it is. I would hope that those who worry about recession, slowdown, whatever you want to call it, make the tax cuts permanent as a way of helping to address this issue. Because if you’re somebody out there trying to plan your future and you’re worried about the future and you think your taxes are going to go up, it’s going to cause different behavioral patterns.

Secondly, I do want to thank the Members of Congress. And the man you talked to is a leader and did a very good job of helping shepherd through this billions of dollar package that is now beginning to hit America’s pocketbooks. And we’ll see how that goes. I hope it’s as stimulative as we think it will be. But you can tell the good man you talked to, who is a good guy, that I fully understand that people are concerned. And they’re concerned about high gasoline prices. They’re worried about high food prices, worried about staying in their homes.

The new issue, of course, is student loans. The House of Representatives passed a bill that—sponsored by Mr. Miller, George Miller, that is a—that we think can do the job. I hope the Senate moves a version of it very quickly so that we can help address this issue. I mean, one of the things that Government can do is either create more anxiety or less. And if you think your taxes are going to go up, that’s going to make you anxious. If you think the Government is going to step in with a good policy that will help your child get a student loan, that will make you less anxious.

One of the things we’ve done on homeownership is the HOPE NOW Alliance, which hopefully makes people less anxious. Hopefully it helps—has kind of brought some sense of not only concern but action into the marketplace. And I was told this morning that HOPE NOW has affected

about 1.4 million homeowners and helped a lot of them refinance, get refinancing, or helped a lot of them get different interest payment schedules, all aiming for credit-worthy people to be able to stay in their homes during this difficult period.

Zimbabwe—first of all, the will of the people needed to be respected in Zimbabwe. And it is clear that they voted for change, as they should've, because the—Mr. Mugabe has failed the country. It's a country that used to be an exporter of food; it's now got terrible human conditions there.

Secondly, the violence and the intimidation is simply unacceptable. The Government is intent upon, and is, intimidating the people there.

We support the U.N. Security Council discussions that are going on. But the truth of the matter is, April—and you mentioned this—it's really incumbent upon the nations in the neighborhood to step up and lead and recognize that the will of the people must be respected and recognize that that will came about because they're tired of failed leadership.

Thank you all for your interest. Enjoyed it.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:31 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon; President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority; Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; and President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. Reporters referred to former President Jimmy Carter; and Representative James E. Clyburn of South Carolina.

Remarks Following a Discussion With Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Afghanistan Kai Eide

April 29, 2008

President Bush. I have just had a very constructive and important dialog with the United Nations envoy to Afghanistan. Mr. Ambassador, thank you so very much for coming to the Oval Office, and thank you so much for serving the cause of peace.

Ambassador Eide. Thank you.

President Bush. You've been given a very difficult job, which is to help coordinate world—the world's efforts to help this young democracy succeed. And I want to assure you that the United States Government and I personally support you in everything you're going to do.

We've supported this—the creation of this position. We supported your nomination because you're a man of action, a man of determination, and a man willing to sacrifice to help the Karzai Government, but more importantly, help the people of Afghanistan realize the blessings of liberty.

The Afghan theater in this war against the extremists is a vital part of making sure that peace prevails. And no question, there's challenges. As I told the Ambassador, if this were easy, we wouldn't have selected a man of his caliber to—or the U.N. wouldn't have selected a man of his caliber to take on the task.

And so I appreciate your time. This is our first meeting, and I hope that—I know it won't be the last. He's given me good advice. He's given me a picture of what—on how the United States Government can help him accomplish his missions, and we're more than willing to help.

And so I welcome you to the Oval Office. And thank you for your great service.

Ambassador Eide. Thank you very much, Mr. President. For me, it's been an honor to be here and also to feel the support and confidence that you have shown me as I now take on this very difficult assignment. That support is very important to me; that I know that I have the confidence of the international community and also the confidence of the Afghan Government and the President of Afghanistan, which I feel very strongly—

President Bush. Yes, sir.

Ambassador Eide. —after my first few weeks. That's—those are important tools for me in order to perform my duties effectively.

We also discussed one important event that lies ahead of us, which is the Paris conference on the 12th of June, and the importance of doing everything we can to mobilize support, mobilize donors, and also see to it

that our efforts are as coordinated and as effective as they possibly can.

So thank you very much, Mr. President, for this occasion and for the support you give me.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Glad you're here.

Ambassador Eide. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:48 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan.

Remarks on National Volunteer Week

April 29, 2008

Be seated. Welcome. What a great day for the White House. I am pleased to welcome volunteers from around the United States who have given of their time to help those who need help. And we're sure glad you're here. Those of you today who perform acts of kindness do so out of love, and you do so out of the desire not to be recognized. But anyway, you're going to be recognized. We have the opportunity today to thank you and the opportunity today to celebrate the difference that volunteers have made all across America.

I want to thank Jean Case, who's the Chairman of the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation. And I want to thank the members of the Council who are here.

And I thank David Eisner, the CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service; Jack Hawkins, the Director of Volunteers for Prosperity, USAID; Ron Tschetter, Director of the Peace Corps; and other Peace Corps volunteers who are here—about which I'm going to say something a little later. *[Laughter]* This tends to be an enthusiastic bunch, and so I would ask you to—*[laughter]*—keep your enthusiasm in check for just a minute. *[Laughter]*

The spirit of charity that is celebrated here has been a part of our character, our Nation's character, ever since before we were an independent nation. In 1736, for example, Benjamin Franklin organized the citizens of Philadelphia to form a volunteer fire com-

pany. Isn't that interesting? A lot of our—a lot has changed since then, but the principle that inspired Benjamin Franklin is still true today all throughout the communities in America.

Those of you who are here today understand the lesson—how you can gain by giving. You can understand how volunteering can transform the souls, both who give and those they help. When you teach a child to read, for example, you not only improve their chances for success in the world, but you become invested in the progress of a young life. When you visit the elderly, you remind them that they are loved, and you remind yourself of how deeply we all feel the need for compassion. When you help the homeless find shelter, you remove the pain of need and rediscover the resiliency of the human spirit.

While there are many ways that Government can help society's least advantaged—and we try to do our best here in Washington—it can never replicate the private acts of goodness and the ties of affection they create between Americans. And that is why our administration has focused on empowering citizens with open hearts, not just Government programs by opening up checkbooks.

I strongly support the faith-based and community-based initiative. I believe it is in Government's interest to empower those neighborhood healers and helpers, social entrepreneurs to be able to complete their acts of love and compassion. Government is love in—Government is justice and law; it's not love. Love is found in the hearts of our fellow citizens. And the true strength of America truly is found in the hearts and souls of Americans who hear the universal call to love a neighbor.

One of the ways that we have tried to encourage volunteerism is through the creation of the USA Freedom Corps. The Freedom Corps is an attempt—and a successful attempt, I might add—to create a culture of service and citizenship and responsibility. And so one way to be useful in the Government level is to provide a way for citizens to become connected to service opportunities in their communities. And it's working; it really is. Last year alone, more than 60 million—60 million volunteers from all

across America provided social services and aid to those in need, both here at home and abroad.

The volunteers oftentimes work for large charitable organizations, or they find individual opportunities in their own community. But it always requires someone willing to say, "I want to help somebody else." And so Americans, if they want to find out how they can help, if you're motivated by Volunteer Week, or if you're motivated by hearing this message—you're motivated by a neighbor saying, "Gosh, it's really made my life better to help somebody in need," why don't you go to the web site of USA Freedom Corps. And you can look it up at volunteer.gov. It's not all that hard. You just get on there and type volunteer.gov. [Laughter] And you can find opportunities to be able to serve your country by helping somebody who needs some help.

Another step we've taken is the creation of the Presidential Council on Service and Civic Participation. And one of the Council's initiatives is awarding the President's Volunteer Service Award, which is a distinction that honors hard work and dedication. It's a way to say thanks. We can't give everybody an award. I wish we could. So we try to herald people who can set a good example for others.

And this year, we focused on recognizing volunteer programs that are started in corporate America. I believe corporate America has got an enormous responsibility to give back to their communities—and so too those who are being honored today. Paul Otellini and Barry Salzberg are with us. I'm going to talk about each one of them individually.

First, Barry Salzberg—he's the CEO of Deloitte, and he is—he understands the need to be a good corporate citizen. He understands corporate giving is an essential part of being a good citizen in the United States of America. He himself has been a board member of several charitable organizations, including the College Summit, the YMCA of Greater New York, and the Committee for Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy.

Under his leadership, Deloitte has committed to providing pro bono services worth up to \$50 million for the nonprofit sector

over the next 3 years. And, Barry, thank you very much for being here.

And then there's Paul Otellini. Glad you're here, Paul. He happens to be the CEO of a little mom and pop operation called Intel. [Laughter] Intel will be celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. The company could have chosen to mark this occasion by simply looking back on its four decades of impressive accomplishments, but instead, as a result of Paul's leadership, the company has chosen to celebrate with a great act of compassion: Intel has committed to 1 million hours of volunteer service by its employees. This is a huge effort, and I can't tell you how appreciative we are of your generosity, but more importantly, those who you will help are more appreciative of your generosity. Please thank your employees for their—[applause].

There is a lot of volunteer work here in America. Every day, there are just countless acts of compassion. And interestingly enough, it doesn't require one Government law. As a matter of fact, oftentimes people are inspired by a higher law.

And there are also countless acts of compassion overseas. One of the great joys for Laura and me is to—as we travel is to be able to see ordinary citizens from the United States helping save babies' lives as a result of the malaria initiative or working with orphans who have been left alone because of HIV/AIDS. And also, it's a chance for us to really run into one of the great organizations that Government has sponsored. It's called the Peace Corps.

Forty-seven years ago, President John F. Kennedy, in the Rose Garden, sent the first team of Peace Corps volunteers to Africa. And in the intervening years, more than 190,000 Peace Corps volunteers have carried our country's great spirit of generosity and compassion throughout the world.

Laura and I met with Peace Corps volunteers in Ghana recently, and they are some kind of fired up. [Laughter] And a matter of fact, it is exciting to be with those good souls who are motivated to put—to go help, and in so doing, it really is the best foreign policy America could possibly have.

And today I just had my picture taken with a group of spirited volunteers—[laughter]—who are headed to Guatemala. And I thank

you all for your service. And I'm glad you're here, and thanks for coming.

I believe strongly in the admonition, to whom much is given, much is required. Those of you here today are living up to that noble calling, and you carry on the best traditions of American citizenship. In my first Inaugural Address, I said, it's important to be a citizen, not a spectator. And there's no better way to be a citizen [than] * to be a soldier in the armies of compassion, a foot soldier.

And so today we commemorate your work and the work of volunteers all across the country, here at the White House. I appreciate the lasting legacy that you've helped create in the hearts of our fellow citizens. I thank you for what you do. And I ask for God's blessings on your work. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:58 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Proclamation 8247—Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, 2008

April 29, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Americans who trace their ancestry to Asia and the Pacific Islands have contributed much to our Nation. During Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, we highlight their importance to our great Nation.

Asian/Pacific Americans have made our country better with their talents and hard work. Their values and commitment to family and community have helped shape and strengthen America. These citizens speak many languages, honor countless traditions, and practice different faiths, but they are bound by a shared commitment to freedom and liberty. The diversity among Asian/Pacific Americans adds to the cultural fabric of our society.

Asian/Pacific Americans have enriched our culture, excelling in many fields, including education, business, science, technology, government, sports, and the arts. We espe-

cially honor those Asian/Pacific Americans who have answered the call to protect the cause of freedom by serving in our Armed Forces. These brave men and women set a powerful example for all Americans.

As we celebrate Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, we are reminded of the richness of the Asian and Pacific cultures. Asian/Pacific Americans enhance the American experience and contribute to our country's legacy of diversity.

To honor the achievements and contributions of Asian/Pacific Americans, the Congress, by Public Law 102-450, as amended, has designated the month of May each year as "Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 2008 as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month. I call upon the people of the United States to learn more about the history of Asian/Pacific Americans and their many contributions to our Nation and to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:26 a.m., April 30, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on May 1.

Proclamation 8248—Jewish American Heritage Month, 2008

April 29, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Jewish American Heritage Month is an opportunity to celebrate the history, culture, and faith of Jewish Americans and their contributions to our Nation.

The story of the Jewish people in America is the story of America itself. When the first

* White House correction.

Jewish settlers arrived on our shores hundreds of years ago, they saw a land of promise and liberty. With hard work and determination, these individuals helped build our country and strengthen our values. Their commitment to religious freedom and their belief in democracy have enriched our society and helped make our country a beacon of hope for all.

Many Jewish Americans have served in our military with valor and distinction in times of war and peace. We pay special tribute to all those who stepped forward when our country needed them most. These American heroes confronted grave dangers to protect our Nation.

During Jewish American Heritage Month and throughout the year, we honor Jewish Americans who played an integral role in shaping the cultural fabric of our Nation. Their spirit and talents have helped America succeed and prosper, and their efforts continue to remind us of the many blessings of this great country.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 2008 as Jewish American Heritage Month. I call upon all Americans to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities to honor Jewish Americans across the country.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:26 a.m., April 30, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on May 1.

Proclamation 8249—National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, 2008

April 29, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Health and fitness are personal responsibilities and important national goals for our citizens. During National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, we highlight the benefits of exercise and the value of participating in sports.

It is important for all Americans to participate in activities that help maintain a healthy lifestyle. Outdoor activities such as walking, running, swimming, and biking are good for the mind, body, and soul. Regular physical activity and healthy eating habits can help reduce stress and lower the risk for many chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and depression.

My Administration is committed to encouraging all Americans to remain physically active. Through the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, the National President's Challenge allows participants of all ages to set a fitness goal and keep track of their progress as they work to achieve it. To get more information, or to sign up to participate, people can visit presidentschallenge.org. By getting involved and exercising for 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week, Americans can improve their health and happiness and set a positive example for others.

During National Physical Fitness and Sports month and throughout the year, I encourage all Americans to make physical fitness a priority in their lives.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 2008 as National Physical Fitness and Sports Month. I call upon my fellow citizens to recognize the importance of exercise and participate in athletic activities. I also encourage individuals, schools, and communities to celebrate this

month with appropriate activities and programs.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:26 a.m., April 26, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on May 1.

Remarks Honoring the 2008 National and State Teachers of the Year

April 30, 2008

The President. Good morning. Good morning. Welcome to the White House. Welcome to the Rose Garden. We're walking out of the Oval Office, Mike turns to me and says, "I like what you've done with the place." [Laughter] All I did was mow the lawn. [Laughter] Glad you're here.

I'm really glad to be taking a part of an event that honors America's teachers. It's a tradition that started with Harry Truman. It's a tradition that Laura and I have really enjoyed carrying on. She's not here unfortunately. She sends her best. You know, I like to tell people that, you know, one of the interesting questions you get in my line of work is, "Can you name a teacher who had influenced you?" I said, "Yes, my wife." [Laughter]

But she and Jenna are out promoting a new book that they wrote called "Read All About It." I'm not suggesting that people buy it, of course. That would be unseemly here in the Rose Garden. [Laughter] But it is a book where they're attempting to promote literacy. She sends her love. She understands what it means to be a teacher. We were so honored that our little girl chose to be a teacher as well. It made her dad feel really well. I'm sure—I just hope you know the influence you have on children. I suspect you do; that's why you're such a good teacher.

Good teachers hear a call. Good teachers are empathetic souls. And really, the best

teachers have a special intuition and, I suspect, a little potential, and so the ability to see potential and the ability to have the patience necessary to watch it grow. I want to thank you for nurturing young minds. I thank you for providing such wonderful examples. And I thank you for inspiring the imaginations and unleashing the talents of our Nation's young.

I'm up here with not only the Teacher of the Year but with Margaret Spellings, the Secretary of Education. I do want to welcome Senator Gordon Smith and Senator [Congressman]* Greg Walden. Turns out they're both from the State of Oregon. [Laughter] I wonder why you're here? But anyway, I'm glad you're here. Thank you for being strong supporters of the teachers in your State.

I welcome the State Teachers of the Year. I really enjoyed seeing you in the Oval Office. It's fun for me to be able to greet you and say thank you. And I can't thank you enough for serving as such great role models for other teachers in your States. And we're sure glad you're here.

I do want to thank the National Teacher of the Year finalist: Lewis Chappale, who is with us—thank you, Lewis—from California; June Teisan, from Michigan; as well as Tommy Smigiel, from Virginia—that would be Norfolk, Virginia.

I am obviously up here with the Teacher of the Year. I'll spend a little time talking about Michael in a minute, but I am so proud that his mom and dad have joined us, as is he. Thank you for coming. I know it brings you great pride to have raised a son who is dedicated to helping others. His wife is with us, for whom I'll say something else a little later; son and daughter is with us, as well as brother. Thanks for coming.

Finally, we got Ken James, president-elect, Council of the Chief State School Officers, who administers the Teacher of the Year program. Thanks for coming. And the rest of you are welcome here too. [Laughter]

One of the things that Margaret and I have tried to do is help teachers be able to set high standards and achieve accountability. And that was the spirit behind passing No

* White House correction.

Child Left Behind Act. It basically—if you really think about the act, it, one, refuses to, what I used to call—still call—refuses to accept the soft bigotry of low expectations. I firmly believe that if you have low expectations, you'll achieve them. I believe that when you say to people, we want you to achieve high expectations, you really have got this great faith in the human potential. I also believe that if you're a teacher that you ought to welcome a law that says we trust you in your ability to set high expectations.

And secondly, behind that law is a notion that we'd like at least to know whether or not people can read, write, and add and subtract. Good teachers understand that. As a matter of fact, the Teacher of the Year understands that, and I suspect you all do as well. I'm often told that the accountability system is a—is meant to punish. I don't think so. I think it's meant to diagnose and correct and reward. And you're Teachers of the Year because you've got kids in your classroom who are excelling. And the reason we know is because we measure.

And so I want to thank you for being people willing to set high standards. Curiously enough, because we do measure, we have learned this fall that fourth graders and eighth [graders]* earned the highest math and reading scores in the history of our Nation's Report Card. That's a positive sign. Eighth graders set a record in math scores. In other words, because we are people who believe in accountability, we're beginning to get a sense for whether or not the achievement gap in America is closing. And it must close in order for this country to realize its full potential.

We understand that there's been some tough, tough neighborhoods, but that should not be an excuse for mediocrity. And I know our Teachers of the Year understand that and are willing to challenge the status quo and expect the best. And so we appreciate very much your work. And we hope Congress would reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act. It's—and we're committed to working with Members of Congress to do it. The good news is the act doesn't go away without reauthorization; it still exists.

* White House correction.

And so what—last week, what Secretary Spellings did, because the act hasn't been reauthorized, is that she announced a package of reforms that the Department of Education is now implementing to improve the No Child Left Behind Act—reforms that support our teachers and provide help to struggling students.

One thing about No Child is that when you find somebody struggling, it's important to get extra resources to help that child get up to speed now, before it's too late. The reforms are going to deal with—help schools deal with dropouts, increase accountability, and ensure that more students get the tutoring we want.

And so I want to thank you, Margaret, for being a leader, realizing the situation needs to be constantly improved, and improving it. And I think you'll find these additional tools and these measures will help you, not hurt you, and make it easier to do your job.

And I hope Senators in Congress—we don't give up on reauthorization. I understand it's an election year and sometimes things don't get done, but this is a brilliant, important piece of legislation. And I thank you all for supporting us the first round. And I hope we can work together on this round as well.

One person who believes very strongly in the potential of each child is our Teacher of the Year, Michael Geisen, who happens to be from Prineville, Oregon. Before he entered teaching—interesting enough, if you're from Prineville, one of the options for you is to be a forester. And he loves nature. He's an outdoors guy, and yet he really longed to be with his fellow citizens. There's no better way to do so than teaching. And so 7 years ago, after being a forester, he got in the classroom at Crook County Middle School.

It was not an easy time for that school when he entered. Crook County had gone through five principals in 6 years. Students' test scores had flatlined. In other words, kind of—they were just maintaining, which is unacceptable. It's unacceptable to Michael; it should be unacceptable to everybody if we're just kind of maintaining.

And so Mike saw his challenge, and he rose to it. You raised a good guy. Great teachers like Mike are optimists who believe in setting

high standards. He believes that every child can learn if given a chance. And so when he became head of the science department, he created assessments for the students, and he put a system in place to measure results. That's what confident, optimistic people do; they say, "I'm not afraid to measure." And if you believe every child can learn, then you want to assess to make sure they are.

He knew the importance of parental involvement, so he created family-oriented school projects that would enlist moms and dads in their children's work. I suspect a lot of the Teachers of the Year understand how important that is, and that's why you're sitting out there. And he saw results. In his first 2 years as the department chair, the school State achievement scores in science rose from 55 percent to 72 percent, and they're still rising.

Great teachers like Mike instill a love of learning in young people. And so he captivates his students—I told you about his humor, right? *[Laughter]* "Did a fine job out here, President." *[Laughter]* Well, that—he takes that humor into the classroom.

He also loves to use music in his classroom, and he has a hands-on science curriculum. So, like, on the music deal—so he turns to songs to get people to pay attention. One of the greatest hits he's used is about gravity. One I like was a blues song written from the perspective of a lonely bacterium. *[Laughter]* Like, you can sing it here in the Rose Garden if you want to. *[Laughter]*

Michael Geisen. You got a band? *[Laughter]*

The President. Yes, I probably suggest you don't. But—*[laughter]*—I tried to dance here one time, and it made a—*[laughter]*—it didn't work. *[Laughter]*

But here's what one of his students said: "Mike Geisen is such an awesome teacher"—actually called him Mr. Geisen—"he's an awesome teacher. He could make watching grass grow interesting." No wonder you're Teacher of the Year. One of his signature achievements is the annual science fair where the students create everything from electric cars to electric hotdog cookers. The fair culminates with what Mike calls "a legendary evening of science, creativity, food, and wackiness." It's not what a lot of people

think as a science class, to be frank with you, but nevertheless, it's a reason he's the Teacher of the Year.

He's found innovative ways to use his innate humor and creativity to encourage students to take science seriously. And we need a lot of scientists in America.

He also is a role model. You all are all role models. He teaches his students the—about the importance of service by demonstrating it in his own life. One of the things he's done is he's volunteered a lot of time to raise money for rock—for a rock-climbing wall. He's an outdoorsman, as I told you. He strongly has a—respects the environment. And he's a family man. He's a role model because he's a good family man.

Jennifer is here—thank you for coming—as is Aspen and Johanna. And as Mike says, he calls them his favorite teachers. Isn't that an interesting concept? They are—I know they're proud of their dad, as is his family, and so am I. And so we join the Geisen family in congratulating Mike on his well-deserved recognition as the 2008 National Teacher of the Year. *[Applause]* Not yet—*[applause]*—maybe.

I do want to say one final thing, and then we'll get Michael up here and let him give a speech. This is the last Teacher of the Year ceremony I get to do as President. And as I told you, I'm sorry Laura is not here, because she would share in this sentiment. This has really been one of the favorite events of ours during our time in Washington. You're probably just saying, of course, he says that to every event. *[Laughter]* It's always a favorite.

Actually, this is a fabulous opportunity for us to thank our teachers, people who could be doing something else in life and have chosen to go in the classroom to lift somebody's life up, to make a difference in the future of the country.

And so I know you know this: You represent teachers from all over America. So when I thank you, I'm teaching—I'm thanking teachers from all across our country. I appreciate you making our experience here in the White House a joyful experience. I thank you for making America a more hopeful place. And I ask God's blessings on your

work and the work of teachers all across America.

And now, the Secretary and I will give Michael his award.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lisa, mother, Ken, father, Jennifer, wife, Aspen, son, and Johanna, daughter, of Michael Geisen, 2008 National Teacher of the Year. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Mr. Geisen.

Remarks Honoring the 2008 Super Bowl Champion New York Giants

April 30, 2008

The President. Welcome. It's my honor. Thank you for coming. Please be seated. Welcome to the White House. It's an honor to recognize the Super Bowl champs, the New York Football Giants.

I appreciate you all coming. Mr. Vice President, thank you for joining me up here as we welcome the Giants to the South Lawn. I want to thank John Mara and his mom, Ann, who's joined us; Steve Tisch and his mother, Joan; of course, their head football coach, Tom Coughlin, and his wife, Judy. He got the extension; that's a good thing. [Laughter] Makes it a little easier to be standing up here. [Laughter]

I appreciate all the players who have joined us today, and the coaches and the personnel that make the club function.

I thank members of my administration who have joined us. I welcome Members of the Congress, Senate, particularly from New Jersey and New York, State elected officials from New Jersey and New York. It's a good thing to be here.

I welcome those from Walter Reed who have joined us today. And of course, welcome to all the Giants fans. [Applause] Behave yourself. [Laughter]

First, it's good to be up here with the Super Bowl MVP, Eli Manning. We have a few things in common. [Applause] We got some things in common. Eli has a father and a brother in the same business he's in. [Laughter] Sometimes the press are skeptical. [Laughter] And he just survived a big

wedding. So I asked him coming in, "Any advice?" He said, "I wasn't father of the bride." [Laughter]

New York Giants have one of the great storied histories of—in pro football. And this club carried on that great tradition. And perhaps—many would say this is probably the most exciting chapter ever written in the New York Giants' football history. After all, you started off the season and allowed 80 points in the first two games. That would be called a lousy start. [Laughter] And then you're playing the Redskins—

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. It's okay, you know. [Laughter] And the game wasn't going very well, as I recall. And then you rallied, and you won.

And a lot of the people that know something about football said that was the turning point. And the winning streak—what's interesting is—six straight games, as I understand, on two different continents. You also had a great road record. I don't know if the fans understand this, but you piled up more away-game victories than—in NFL history. And the good news is, your fans still loved you at home. [Laughter] They really loved you.

You got into the—you secured a wild card. And it was interesting, in the last game of the season, a lot of folks thought the coach would just kind of lay down and let New England cruise to a perfect season—I remember a lot of people speculating about that last game of the season—and yet you didn't, coach. Your team didn't win on the scoreboard, but you won the hearts of a lot of Americans for contesting the game. And you also—your team—[applause]—and it clearly gave your team some self-confidence, because you stormed through Tampa Bay and then went into Dallas—

Audience members. [Applause]

The President. Look, I'm a good sport. [Laughter] We're going to send Jessica Simpson to the Democrat National Convention. [Laughter]

Packers was one of the coldest games in NFL history. You lit up the field like you were on fire. And Lawrence Tynes, who's with us here, came through with a 47-yard fieldgoal in overtime, putting you in Super Bowl XLII. Yes, I knew you were going to

make it. *[Laughter]* I don't know if everybody else did, but I knew you were going to make it. And you knew you were going to make it.

Lawrence Tynes. I did.

The President. And all of a sudden, a 0-and-2 team was about to square off against the 18-and-0 New England Patriots. Now they've got a lot of experts in our society—coach, you might know what I'm talking about—and in looking back, it's hard to find many of the experts who predicted a Giants victory. Most people were calling it a cakewalk; you know, be prepared to turn off your television sets early because this isn't much of a game you're about to watch; when, in fact, it turned out to be really one of the great, legendary football games in our country's history.

First of all, your defense was awesome, coach, and they deserve a lot of credit. And so does your offense. It was the 83-yard comeback drive in the fourth quarter that a lot of folks will remember for a long time coming. Eli Manning started one of the great plays called “the Great Escape”; it ended on David Tyree's helmet. *[Laughter]* So, like, I'm going to take you in the White House, and you can show me how you did it. *[Laughter]* And then Plaxico Burress, of course, caught the winning touchdown with 35 seconds left.

This is a great team that worked together. You won the Vince Lombardi Trophy, and you won the deep gratitude of the 1972 Miami Dolphins. *[Laughter]*

First of all, you've won the gratitude of your fans. New York Giants fans love these Giants. So we congratulate you all, but we're also congratulating your families, your loved ones, those who make the locker room work, the trainers, the people who clean up after you. We want to—we know you played for some—ones who lost loved ones, like the Tyrees and the Maras and the Tisches. I know you loved going down the Canyon of Heroes for the first ticker-tip—ticker-tape parade since before the attacks of September the 11th, 2001. And I guarantee you, there was a lot of New York firefighters and police who were really thrilled to see you.

I like the fact that this team, the coaches and players, offer free camps for kids. Some

of them run life-changing ministries. They raise money for children who have cancer. This is a team that supports the Ronald McDonald House and the United Way, promotes family literacy through Read Across America. It's even helped run a charter school program in inner-city Newark.

I appreciate the fact, coach, that you and your players support our troops, but more importantly, our troops appreciate the fact that you support them. You've come to know the story like I have, of Lieutenant Colonel Greg Gadson. He lost both of his legs while in Iraq. He first met up with the Giants in September, when you invited him to address a pregame meeting that helped inspire the comeback over the Redskins.

Then you saw him in Tampa, when he was trying out his legs that he walked on today to be on the stage with you. He was an honorary captain in Green Bay. He never left the sidelines, despite the 23-below windchill. In your last team meeting before the Super Bowl, Lieutenant Colonel Greg Gadson urged you to have pride in your team and believe in yourselves, which is exactly what you did.

I'm proud to be on the stage with this man. To me, it's a symbol of your respect for our country and your patriotism that you would let Greg Gadson be a part of this team. He has got the Purple Heart and three Bronze Stars, and now he's got a Super Bowl ring minted for a true giant.

So while you're still on your feet: The Super Bowl New York Giants.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:14 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John K. Mara, president and chief executive officer, Steven Tisch, co-owner, Lawrence Tynes, kicker, and Plaxico Burress, wide receiver, New York Giants; Elisha Archibald “Archie” Manning III, father, and Peyton Manning, brother, of Eli Manning, quarterback, New York Giants; and entertainer Jessica Simpson. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of New York Giants head coach Tom Coughlin.

Statement on North Korea Freedom Week

April 30, 2008

Laura and I send greetings to all those observing North Korea Freedom Week. I am deeply concerned about the grave human rights conditions in North Korea, especially the denial of universal freedoms of speech, press, religion, assembly, and association and restrictions on freedom of movement and workers' rights. I have met in the Oval Office with some of the brave individuals who have escaped from that country. I am deeply concerned by the stories of divided families, harsh conditions, and suffering. The United States stands with the North Korean people in their call for freedom. We believe it is every person's basic right to live in freedom and dignity. We will continue to support the North Korean people as they strive to achieve the rights and freedoms to which they are entitled as human beings. We look forward to the moment when we can celebrate the blessings of liberty with the North Korean people.

Proclamation 8250—Law Day, U.S.A., 2008

April 30, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The right of ordinary men and women to determine their own future, protected by the rule of law, lies at the heart of America's founding principles. As our country celebrates the 50th anniversary of Law Day, we renew our commitment to the ideals on which this great Nation was established and to a robust system of ordered liberty.

The American legal system is central to protecting the rights and freedoms our Nation holds dear. The theme of this year's Law Day, "The Rule of Law: Foundation for Communities of Opportunity and Equity," recognizes the fundamental role that the rule of law plays in preserving liberty in our Nation and in all free societies. We pay tribute to the men and women in America's legal

community. Through hard work and dedication to the rule of law, members of the judiciary and the legal profession help secure the rights of individuals, bring justice to our communities, and reinforce the proud traditions that make America a beacon of light for the world.

Nearly 800 years ago, the Magna Carta placed the authority of government under the rule of law; centuries later, the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution marked tremendous advances in the march of liberty. These documents established enduring principles that guide modern democracies. Today, we are reminded of that past and look toward a hopeful future as we work to secure the liberty that is the natural right of every man, woman, and child.

On Law Day, U.S.A., our Nation celebrates our belief in the equality of each person before God and renews our commitment to strive to bring America ever closer to its founding ideals.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, in accordance with Public Law 87-20, as amended, do hereby proclaim May 1, 2008, as Law Day, U.S.A. I call upon all the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities. I also call upon Government officials to display the flag of the United States in support of this national observance.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this thirtieth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:57 a.m., May 2, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 1, and it will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 6.

Executive Order 13464—Blocking Property and Prohibiting Certain Transactions Related to Burma

April 30, 2008

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA), the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*), the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 (Public Law 108–61, as amended, 50 U.S.C. 1701 note), and section 301 of title 3, United States Code, and in order to take additional steps with respect to the Government of Burma's continued repression of the democratic opposition in Burma, and with respect to the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13047 of May 20, 1997, relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13310 of July 28, 2003, and expanded in Executive Order 13448 of October 18, 2007,

I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, hereby order:

Section 1. Except to the extent provided in section 203(b)(1), (3), and (4) of IEEPA (50 U.S.C. 1702(b)(1), (3), and (4)), the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000 (title IX, Public Law 106–387), or regulations, orders, directives, or licenses that may be issued pursuant to this order, and notwithstanding any contract entered into or any license or permit granted prior to the effective date of this order, all property and interests in property of the following persons that are in the United States, that hereafter come within the United States, or that are or hereafter come within the possession or control of United States persons, including their overseas branches, are blocked and may not be transferred, paid, exported, withdrawn, or otherwise dealt in:

(a) the persons listed in the Annex attached and made a part of this order; and
(b) any person determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, after consultation with the Secretary of State:

(i) to be owned or controlled by, directly or indirectly, the Government of Burma or an official or officials of the Government of Burma;

(ii) to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, logistical, or technical support for, or goods or services in support of, the Government of Burma, the State Peace and Development Council of Burma, the Union Solidarity and Development Association of Burma, any successor entity to any of the foregoing, any senior official of any of the foregoing, or any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to Executive Order 13310, Executive Order 13448, or this order; or

(iii) to be owned or controlled by, or to have acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to Executive Order 13310, Executive Order 13448, or this order.

Sec. 2. (a) Any transaction by a United States person or within the United States that evades or avoids, has the purpose of evading or avoiding, or attempts to violate any of the prohibitions set forth in this order is prohibited.

(b) Any conspiracy formed to violate any of the prohibitions set forth in this order is prohibited.

Sec. 3. For purposes of this order:

(a) the term “person” means an individual or entity;

(b) the term “entity” means a partnership, association, trust, joint venture, corporation, group, subgroup, or other organization;

(c) the term “United States person” means any United States citizen, permanent resident alien, entity organized under the laws of the United States or any jurisdiction within the United States (including foreign branches), or any person in the United States; and

(d) the term “Government of Burma” means the Government of Burma (sometimes referred to as Myanmar), its agencies, instrumentalities and controlled entities, and the Central Bank of Burma.

Sec. 4. I hereby determine that the making of donations of the type specified in section 203(b)(2) of IEEPA (50 U.S.C. 1702(b)(2)) by, to, or for the benefit of, persons whose property and interests in property

are blocked pursuant to section 1 of this order would seriously impair my ability to deal with the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13047, relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13310, and expanded in Executive Order 13448, and hereby prohibit such donations as provided by section 1 of this order.

Sec. 5. For those persons whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to this order who might have a constitutional presence in the United States, I find that because of the ability to transfer funds or other assets instantaneously, prior notice to such persons of measures to be taken pursuant to this order would render these measures ineffectual. I therefore determine that for these measures to be effective in addressing the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13047, relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13310, and expanded in Executive Order 13448, there need be no prior notice of a listing or determination made pursuant to section 1 of this order.

Sec. 6. The Secretary of the Treasury, after consultation with the Secretary of State, is hereby authorized to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA and section 4 of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this order. The Secretary of the Treasury may redelegate any of these functions to other officers and agencies of the United States Government consistent with applicable law. All agencies of the United States Government are hereby directed to take all appropriate measures within their authority to carry out the provisions of this order.

Sec. 7. The Secretary of the Treasury, after consultation with the Secretary of State, is hereby authorized to determine, and to take necessary action to give effect to that determination, that circumstances no longer warrant the blocking of the property and interests in property of, or the prohibiting of transactions with, a person listed in the Annex to this order.

Sec. 8. Nothing in this order is intended to affect the continued effectiveness of any

rules, regulations, orders, licenses, or other forms of administrative action issued, taken, or continued in effect heretofore or hereafter under 31 C.F.R. chapter V, except as expressly terminated, modified, or suspended by or pursuant to this order.

Sec. 9. This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities, or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

Sec. 10. This order is effective at 12:01 a.m. eastern daylight time on May 1, 2008.

George W. Bush

The White House,
April 30, 2008.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:16 a.m., May 1, 2008]

NOTE: This Executive order and its attached annex were released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 1, and they were published in the *Federal Register* on May 2.

Message to the Congress Reporting on Blocking Property and Prohibiting Certain Transactions Related to Burma

April 30, 2008

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*) (IEEPA), I hereby report that I have issued an Executive Order (the "order") that takes additional steps with respect to the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13047 of May 20, 1997, and expanded in Executive Order 13448 of October 18, 2007.

In 1997, the United States put in place a prohibition on new investment in Burma in response to the Government of Burma's large scale repression of the democratic opposition in that country. On July 28, 2003, those sanctions were expanded by steps taken in Executive Order 13310, which contained prohibitions implementing sections 3 and 4 of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy

Act of 2003 (Public Law 108–61) (the “Act”) and supplemented that Act with additional restrictions. On October 18, 2007, I determined that the Government of Burma’s continued repression of the democratic opposition in Burma, manifested at the time in the violent response to peaceful demonstrations, the commission of human rights abuses related to political repression, and engagement in public corruption, including by diverting or misusing Burmese public assets or by misusing public authority, warranted an expansion of the then-existing sanctions. Executive Order 13448, issued on that date, incorporated existing designation criteria set forth in Executive Order 13310, blocked the property and interests in property of persons listed in the Annex to that Executive Order, and provided additional criteria for designations of certain other persons.

The order supplements the existing designation criteria set forth in Executive Order 13310, as incorporated in and expanded by Executive Order 13448. The order blocks the property and interests in property in the United States of persons listed in the Annex to the order and provides additional criteria for designations of persons determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, after consultation with the Secretary of State, to be owned or controlled by, directly or indirectly, the Government of Burma or an official or officials of the Government of Burma; to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, logistical, or technical support for, or goods or services in support of, the Government of Burma, the State Peace and Development Council of Burma, the Union Solidarity and Development Association of Burma, any successor entity to any of the foregoing, any senior official of any of the foregoing, or any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to Executive Order 13310, Executive Order 13448, or the order; or to be owned or controlled by, or to have acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to Executive Order 13310, Executive Order 13448, or the order.

The order leaves in place the existing prohibitions on new investment, the exportation

or reexportation to Burma of financial services, and the importation of any article that is a product of Burma, which were put into effect in Executive Order 13047 and Executive Order 13310.

The order authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury, after consultation with the Secretary of State, to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President by IEEPA and section 4 of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of the order.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order I have issued.

George W. Bush

The White House,
April 30, 2008.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 1.

Remarks on the National Day of Prayer

May 1, 2008

Good morning. Welcome to the White House. And I am honored to join you for the National Day of Prayer. I’m sorry Laura’s not here. She’s out selling her book. [*Laughter*]

Shirley, thank you very much for being the chairman of the National Day of Prayer. Glad you brought old Jim with you. [*Laughter*] Dr. Zacharias, thank you for being the honorary chairman. I appreciate the members of my Cabinet who are here today. Thank you all for coming. It’s good to see Members of the United States Senate and the House of Representatives. Appreciate you all taking time out of your busy schedule to come by. It’s always good to be with you.

I want to thank our military chaplains who are with us. Thank you for doing the Lord’s work with our troops. I’m proud to have prayer leaders here. Rabbi Fishman, thank you; it’s good to see you again, sir. Father Coughlin, from the United States House of Representatives, it’s good to see you, sir. I want to thank Pastor Mays, who will be following

me here shortly, for coming. I'm looking forward to hearing the choir of Saint Patrick's Cathedral of New York City, New York. It's going to be a great moment to have this East Room filled with joy of song. And so I welcome them here today.

On this day, Americans come together to thank our Creator for our Nation's many blessings. We are a blessed nation. And on this day, we celebrate our freedoms, particularly the freedom to pray in public and the great diversity of faith found in America. I love being the President of a country where people feel free to worship as they see fit. And I remind our fellow citizens, if you choose to worship or not worship, and no matter how you worship, we're all equally American.

I think one of the interesting things about a National Day of Prayer is it does help describe our Nation's character to others. We are a prayerful nation. A lot of citizens draw comfort from prayer. Prayer is an important part of the lives of millions of Americans. You know, it's interesting, when you think about our faith, you can find it in the Pledge of Allegiance, you can find an expression of American faith in the Declaration of Independence, and you can find it in the coins in our pockets. I used to carry coins—[laughter]—about 10 months, I'll be carrying them again. [Laughter]

The fidelity to faith has been present in our Nation's leaders from its very start. Upon assuming the Presidency, George Washington took the oath of office and then added the famous plea, "So help me God." On John Adams's first day in the White House, he wrote a prayer that is now etched in marble on the fireplace in the State Dining Room. And he prayed, "May none but honest and wise men ever rule under this roof." Now, we'll leave it to the historians to judge whether or not that happened throughout our history. [Laughter]

During the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln turned to prayer. His second Inaugural Address quoted from Scripture. He stood before the United States people and quoted from Scripture. And he sought to heal a people who "read the same Bible and prayed to the same God"—his words.

As William McKinley lay dying from an assassin's bullet, one of his final words on Earth focused on the Almighty. On his deathbed he was heard to say, "Nearer, my God, to thee."

As American forces risked their lives on D-day, Franklin Roosevelt delivered a Presidential prayer over the radio. He asked God to protect our troops as they liberated "a suffering humanity," and he prayed for "a peace that will let all men live in freedom." When Roosevelt died, his successor, Harry Truman, said he "felt like the moon, the stars, and all the planets" had fallen on him. He told reporters: "Boys, if you ever pray, pray for me now."

John F. Kennedy attended mass in Florida during the last week of his Presidency—and during the last week of his life. It was at that mass that he heard the parable where the—our Lord compared the Kingdom of Heaven to a mustard seed that grew into a large tree and offered shelter to God's creatures.

Three days after the worst terrorist attack on American soil, Laura and I joined our fellow citizens in prayer before the Lord. It was in the middle hour of our grief. We prayed for those who were missing. We prayed for the dead. We prayed for those who loved them. I recall the words of a woman from New York, who said, "I prayed to God to give us a sign that He is still here."

Well, sometimes God's signs are not always the ones we look for. And we learn in tragedy that His purposes are not always our own. But we also know that in adversity, we can find comfort through prayer.

Over the last 7 years, our country has faced many trials. And time and time again, we have turned to prayer and found strength and resilience. We prayed with those who've lost everything in natural disasters and helped them heal and recover and build. We prayed for our brave and brilliant troops who died on the field of battle. We lift up their families in prayer. And as we pray for God's continued blessings on our country, I think it makes sense to hope that one day there may be an international day of prayer; that one day the national prayer—[applause]. It would be a chance for people of faith around the world to stop at the same time to pause to praise an Almighty. It would be a time when we

could prayer together for a world that sees the promise of the Psalms made real: “Your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth.”

I want to thank you all for coming. I particularly want to thank you for your prayers. You know, somebody asked me one time when I was there—over seeing the Sea of Galilee, they said, “What did you think about when you were there, Mr. President?” I said, “I have finally understood the story of the calm on the rough seas.” I may have been a little hardheaded at times, but I’m absolutely convinced it was the prayers of the people who helped me understand, in turbulence you can find calm and strength. And I thank you for those prayers.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Shirley Dobson, chairman, National Day of Prayer Task Force, and her husband, James; Ravi Zacharias, honorary chairman, National Day of Prayer Task Force; Rabbi Lyle Fishman, Ohr Kodesh Congregation, Chevy Chase, MD; and Pastor Steve Mays, senior pastor, Cavalry Chapel South Bay, Gardena, CA. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on the Observance of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

May 1, 2008

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thank you. Good afternoon. And welcome to the White House. The East Room is a fitting place to celebrate Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. I say fitting because in 1860, this was where James Buchanan first—became the first President to receive an official delegation from Japan. It was a great meeting, except for one slight wrinkle. The interpreter the Japanese brought with them couldn’t speak English. [*Laughter*] So he translated Japanese into Dutch—[*laughter*—and then another interpreter translated Dutch into English. [*Laughter*] I thought that was pretty interesting. People say when I speak, it sounds like Japanese translated into Dutch translated into English. [*Laughter*] I’m just upholding a diplomatic tradition. [*Laughter*]

During Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, we honor citizens whose families have come from halfway around the world, but who are now an integral part of America. I want to thank former Secretary and my dear friend Norm Mineta, who, when he was in Congress, introduced legislation that led to this celebration. And I thank each of you for coming to be a part of it.

Madam Secretary, we’re proud you’re here. Elaine Chao has been a member of my Cabinet since day one, and I think America is better off for it. So thank you for coming, Madam Secretary. Members of Congress—Congressman Wu, thank you for being here, sir. Members of my administration, I’m glad you all are here. Members of the diplomatic corps, it’s so kind of you to take time out of your day to come. We got our veterans here and, of course, members of the United States military. Proud to call you Commander in Chief, and thank you for being here today.

More than 15 million Americans claim Asian or Pacific ancestry. They make America’s culture more vibrant, and we’re a better place—and a more lively place, I might add, from Songkran celebrations in Los Angeles to Chinese New Year parties in Chicago to Diwali festivals right here at the White House.

Asian Pacific Americans make our country more competitive. It turns out, there’s a great entrepreneurial streak that runs throughout the citizens whom we honor today. Small-business owners all over America are creating new jobs and are living the dream. They enrich America because of their love for America.

Many Asians have settled in this country after fleeing oppressive regimes. They looked at America as a hopeful place. They include the boat people of Vietnam, men and women who escaped the killing fields of Cambodia, those who endured the Cultural Revolution in China, and victims of the regime in North Korea.

America must always remember that we are a place of hope and freedom for people who live in oppressive societies. Throughout the Asian American community, there is a special appreciation of liberty known only to those who’ve been denied it. If you’ve been

denied freedom, if freedom is something you long for, you understand how to treasure it. Asian Americans are committed to advancing the cause of freedom—I can't thank you enough for that—both in their ancestral nations and in our own.

Together we work to expand economic freedom and prosperity in the Asian-Pacific region. It's in our interest that we enter to trading agreements with nations throughout the world, starting with South Korea. I negotiated a free trade agreement last June with South Korea. This agreement is going to create opportunities for American businesses and workers. It will increase trade between our countries by about \$17 billion. It's going to strengthen America's relationship with one of our closest, closest allies. When President Lee visited the United States a few weeks ago, I promised him that I would encourage Congress in as many ways as I could to get this agreement passed, that I'd work hard to remind people that this is a mutually beneficial agreement.

The Asian community efforts have supported free trade agreements throughout the Asian-Pacific area. And I want to thank you for working to educate Members of Congress about why we ought to improve this agreement as soon as possible.

We're working to increase security and reduce the threats to freedom in the Asia-Pacific region. Thank you for coming, Chris Hill. He's very much involved in what we've called the six-party talks, which is where we've joined with Korea, Japan, and Russia and China to convince North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program. Nations have come together to send a clear message that it's important to abandon those nuclear weapons ambitions. We want a Korean Peninsula that is nuclear weapons-free.

We've put together what's called the Proliferation Security Initiative. It works with more than 85 countries, including many in the Asia-Pacific region, to stop the shipment of the world's most dangerous weapons. In other words, this is just kind of a quest for security and freedom. And we're working with nations all throughout the world, including those in the Asian-Pacific region, to protect our peoples from the true threats of the 21st century. We're working with Pakistan

and Indonesia and Malaysia and the Philippines and other partners—and Singapore and other partners—to dismantle terrorist networks and to combat the ideology of the extremists.

You can always defeat an ideology of hate with an ideology of hope. And there's nothing more hopeful than a system based upon human rights and human dignity and a system based upon the freedom for people to worship and speak their minds freely.

We're working with India to promote democracy and the peace it yields throughout the continent. We're working together to extend the hope of liberty throughout Asia.

I know you share my concerns about the situation in Tibet. I welcome the recent statements by the Chinese Government expressing its willingness to meet with representatives of the Dalai Lama. It's precisely what I have suggested President Hu Jintao do. I think it's important that there be a renewed dialog, and that dialog must be substantive, so we can address the real way—in a—including—can address in a real way the deep and legitimate concerns of the Tibetan people.

In Burma, the brutal military regime continues to reject the clear will of the Burmese people to live under leaders of their own choosing. So over the past 8 months, my administration has tightened sanctions on the regime. We've imposed visa bans on the junta's generals and their families and their cronies. We're trying to send a clear message, and we hope the rest of the world follows as well.

Today I've issued a new Executive order that instructs the Treasury Department to freeze the assets of Burmese state-owned companies that are major sources of funds that prop up the junta. These companies, in industries such as gems and timber, exploit the labor of the downtrodden Burmese people but enrich only the generals. And today I'm sending yet another clear message that we expect there to be change, and we expect these generals to honor the will of the people.

We're are also working to address the humanitarian crisis in Burma. The U.S. has resettled tens of thousands of Burmese refugees in the last few years, and this year, we

expect to admit as many as 18,000 more. Last December, I signed legislation to ease restrictions that have prevented ethnic minorities involved in the struggle against the Burmese regime from entering the United States.

And I applaud the Asian Americans who have helped these refugees get settled once they come to the United States of America. It's got to be hard to come here not knowing the language. It's got to be hard to come here as a stranger. And I thank those of you and those around the country who have opened up their arms and said, "Welcome to America. How can we help you settle in?" I urge others, especially those who share the customs of these newest Asian Americans, to help them feel at home here in their adopted country.

We're working together to strengthen our partnership with Japan, which is really one of the great success stories of freedom. Six decades ago, my dad fought the Japanese. They were the sworn enemy of the United States of America. And now his son sits down with the Prime Ministers of Japan talking about how to keep the peace. Isn't that interesting? What a great irony it is, that the father served to fight, and the son serves to work with the Prime Minister of the former enemy to keep the peace. Freedom is transformative. Freedom and democracy are powerful instruments of change.

The lesson learned in this example is one that we can apply elsewhere around the world to yield the peace that we all want. And this friendship was made possible by Americans who understood the power—the transformative power of freedom years ago. I wasn't the first person to think of that. Fortunately, predecessors of mine understood with great faith that freedom is universal, that freedom is widespread, that people long to be free, and if given the chance to be free, peaceful societies develop.

With us today are veterans from the 442d Regimental Combat Team. This was a segregated Army unit composed mostly of volunteers recruited from internment camps in the United States. Isn't that interesting? People whose love of the country was such that they were over—able to overcome the bitterness of being interned by a country they

called home. And they were willing to put on the uniform, and not only put on the uniform—they served America with distinction in eight battle campaigns in Europe. In 1945, members of the 442d helped liberate the concentration camp at Dachau. They went from an intern camp, to wear the uniform of the United States Army, to liberate camps in Europe.

Yet the 442d is best known for their mission to rescue the trapped soldiers of the Texas National Guard's "lost battalion." A lot of Texans thanking you guys for that, by the way. [*Laughter*] In the mountains of eastern France, the 442d went up against the heavily entrenched Germans and suffered devastating casualties. But their courage saved more than 200 of their brothers. Their valor helped earn them several Presidential Unit Citations and helped make their unit one of the most highly decorated in U.S. military history. Their sacrifice earns the gratitude of the nation they defended, and an attitude we express today to the men of the 442d. Thank you for coming.

I do want to point out one soul who's joined us—and Ben is not going to be happy about it—Ben Kuroki. He probably doesn't want to be called out, but I'm going to do it anyway, Ben. I got the podium, and you don't. [*Laughter*]

Two days after Pearl Harbor, Ben volunteered to join the Army, where there is no doubt he met prejudice at nearly every turn. Still, he became one of the few Nisei admitted to the Army Air Corps. He flew 58 missions over Europe and Japan, and he earned three Distinguished Flying Crosses.

When he came back home, he turned to another mission: working to overcome the intolerance he had experienced during his early days in the Army. Ben edited newspapers. He spoke to audiences around the country. He became a strong advocate of racial equality. He knew something, and he knew the subject well, unfortunately.

Sixty years after the Japanese surrender, Ben received the U.S. Army Distinguished Service Medal. And at the ceremony, here's what he said: "I had to fight like hell to fight for my country, and now I feel completely vindicated."

We are glad you feel vindicated, but I am proud to tell you, America is a better place because of you, Ben. Thank you for coming.

And so during Asia Pacific American Heritage Month, we thank you all for helping make America a better place. We thank you for loving our country the way you do. The way—thank you for being great contributors to the life of our fellow citizens.

We ask for God's continued blessings on you, your family, and all the citizens of our great land. Thanks for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:53 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta; President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea; Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Christopher R. Hill; Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama of Tibet; President Hu Jintao of China; and Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda of Japan.

Remarks on Emergency Food Aid Programs

May 1, 2008

In recent weeks, many have expressed concern about the significant increase in global food prices. And I share that concern. In some of the world's poorest nations, rising prices can mean the difference between getting a daily meal or going without food.

To address this problem, 2 weeks ago, my administration announced that about \$200 million in emergency food aid would be available through a program at the Agriculture Department called the Emerson Trust. But that's just the beginning of our efforts. I think more needs to be done, and so today I am asking Congress to provide an additional \$770 million to support food aid and development programs. Together this amounts to nearly \$1 billion in new funds to bolster global food security. And with other security assistant programs already in place, we're now projecting to spend nearly—that we will spend nearly \$5 billion in 2008 and 2009 to fight global hunger.

This funding will keep our existing emergency food aid programs robust. We have been the leader for providing food to those who are going without in the past, and we

will continue to be the leader around the world. It will also allow us to fund agricultural development programs that help farmers in developing countries increase their productivity. And of course, this will help reduce the number of people who need emergency food aid in the first place.

As America increases its food assistance, it's really important that we transform the way that food aid is delivered. In my State of the Union Address this year, I called on Congress to support a proposal to purchase up to nearly 25 percent of food assistance directly from farmers in the developing world. And the reason you do that is, in order to break the cycle of famine that we're having to deal with too often in the modern era, it's important to help build up local agriculture. I ask Congress to approve this measure as soon as possible. It's a commonsense way to help deal with food emergencies around the world.

Now, other countries have a role to play as well. America is in the lead; we'll stay in the lead. And we expect others to participate along with us. We're working with our G-8 partners and other developed nations to secure commitments from their governments for additional food aid.

We're also working toward the conclusion of a successful Doha agreement that will reduce and eliminate tariffs and other barriers as well as market-distorting subsidies for agricultural goods. And the reason why getting a Doha round done is important is it'll end up reducing the cost of food, importing food; it'll make it cheaper for consumers all around the world. In other words, we want to change the system to make it easier for people to get less expensive food.

We're also urging countries that have instituted restrictions on agricultural exports to lift those restrictions. Some countries are preventing needed food from getting to market in the first place, and we call upon them to end those restrictions to help ease suffering for those who aren't getting food.

We're also urging countries to remove barriers to advanced crops developed through biotechnology. These crops are safe; they're resistant to drought and disease; and they hold the promise of producing more food for more people.

Now, here at home, we're working to ensure that our poorest citizens get the food they need. Since 2001, the administration, in working with Congress, has increased funding for nutrition assistance programs by 76 percent. We've adjusted food stamp benefits annually to cover price increases at the checkout counter. And last month, the Agriculture Department made available an additional \$150 million to respond to the food needs of those who depend on WIC, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. With this new funding, we will have increased our support for WIC by 18.6 percent this year.

The American people are generous people, and they're compassionate people. We believe in the timeless truth, to whom much is given, much is expected. And so therefore, at home we will work to ensure that the neediest among us can cope with the rising food prices. And with the new international funding I'm announcing today, we're sending a clear message to the world that America will lead the fight against hunger for years to come.

Thank you very much for your interest. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:13 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Statement on the Situation in Burma *May 1, 2008*

The people of Burma have long awaited the opportunity to live in a true democracy. The referendum vote scheduled for May 10, 2008, could have been that opportunity. However, Than Shwe and his regime are ensuring that the referendum vote will be on a dangerously flawed Constitution and will not be free, fair, or credible. They continue to ignore calls from the Burmese people and the international community for a genuine process that could result in a legitimate Constitution reflecting the will of the people, and they continue to carry out a campaign to intimidate voters and to arrest those who dare speak out against the flaws of the referendum and draft Constitution.

The regime has not acted on any of the measures called for by the United Nations

Security Council and does not cooperate with Special Adviser Ibrahim Gambari. We have called for the early release of all political prisoners; implementation of measures to address the political, economic, humanitarian, and human rights issues that are of concern; and the creation of necessary conditions for a genuine dialog with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all concerned parties and ethnic groups in order to achieve an inclusive national reconciliation. Furthermore, the regime has refused offers from Mr. Gambari to provide technical assistance or international monitors for the pending referendum.

Laura and I are committed to work for the people of Burma and help in their struggle to free themselves from the regime's tyranny. I have signed a new Executive order that will block all property and interests in property of designated individuals and entities determined to be owned or controlled by, directly or indirectly, the Government of Burma or an official or officials of the Government of Burma. This Executive order expands existing authorities that allow the United States Government to target those who are responsible for supporting, empowering, and enriching the Burmese regime—a regime that exploits and oppresses the people of Burma.

The United States will continue to pressure Burma's rulers until they respond to the legitimate calls of the Burmese people for a genuine dialog leading to a democratic transition.

NOTE: The statement referred to Senior Gen. Than Shwe, Chairman, State Peace and Development Council of Burma; United Nations Special Envoy for Myanmar Ibrahim Gambari; and Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma.

Statement on World Press Freedom Day

May 1, 2008

May 3 marks World Press Freedom Day. Just and open societies protect and rely on the freedom of the press. That freedom is enshrined in the first amendment to the

United States Constitution, because freedom of speech is integral to a free society.

Brutal regimes and others who seek to stifle liberty often do so by closing down private newspapers and radio and television stations. They kidnap, arbitrarily jail, and beat journalists. Some journalists have been taken from their families for years, and others have been killed for speaking out. Many were killed by terrorists, extremists, and insurgents who seek to deny people even basic access to information as well as the right to free speech.

Journalists should be able to report without fear of persecution. In countries such as Belarus, Burma, China, Cuba, Eritrea, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Syria, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe, repressive laws severely restrict freedom of speech, and those who attempt to report are often imprisoned. In 2007, for the ninth consecutive year, China remained the world's top jailer of journalists, followed by Cuba, Eritrea, Iran, and Azerbaijan.

The United States condemns the harassment, physical intimidation, persecution, and other abuse that journalists, including bloggers and Internet reporters, have faced in China, Cuba, Egypt, Tunisia, Venezuela, and Vietnam, as well as the unsolved murders of journalists in Belarus, Lebanon, and Russia. We call on all governments to guarantee the inalienable rights of their people, including, consistent with article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to freedom of speech and the press.

America stands with those who struggle for their liberty, including those in the press who continue their work in spite of risks. During fiscal year 2007, the United States provided \$78 million in approximately 40 countries to promote media freedom and freedom of information. As President, I have met with many journalists and editors who are struggling against forces that seek to suppress media freedom. We salute these courageous individuals, and we recognize the importance of the right to a free press in spreading freedom around the world.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Student Loans Access Legislation

May 1, 2008

Earlier today Congress passed the "Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act" with overwhelming bipartisan support. I am pleased by Congress's swift action to address this vital issue. In particular, I want to thank the committee chairs and ranking members for their hard work. Millions of students around the country could potentially benefit from this important piece of legislation.

In order to ensure that Americans can continue to compete in the global marketplace, the Federal Government has an obligation to encourage and support people pursuing higher education. By granting the Department of Education greater authority to purchase Federal student loans, today's action should ease the anxiety many students may feel about their ability to finance their education this fall. Thanks to quick and decisive action by my administration and the Congress, Federal student aid will be available in a more timely fashion.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 5715.

Remarks on the National Economy and a Question-and-Answer Session in Maryland Heights, Missouri

May 2, 2008

The President. Thank you very much. Please be seated. Thank you. What he said was, "It's about time you made it." [Laughter] Dave was right; I was scheduled here at World Wide, and then the fires hit in California, and I went out there to help the people try to recover from the natural disaster. And I told him at the Christmas party there at the White House, I said, "I'm coming back." I've always felt like if you're a politician and you make a promise, you better keep it. [Laughter] And so I have.

And the reason why I wanted to come then and wanted to come back is, I think it's very important for the President to recognize success and for the President to herald entrepreneurship. And so in meeting with Dave and

Jim and the employees of this company, really what I'm saying is that the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well here at World Wide.

You heard the man say that over the past 7 years, revenues have tripled, and they've expanded the job base by 500 people. And what's relevant for America is that it's the small-business sector—I don't know if you call yourself small anymore; you're probably a medium-sized business sector—[laughter]—that creates jobs. Seventy percent of new jobs in America are created by small- and medium-sized businesses. And if you're worried about the economy like I'm worried about the economy, then it makes sense to put policy in place that encourages investment and growth with the job creators.

And that's what I want to spend a little time talking to you about. But before I do so, I do want to thank the World Wide Technology employees. The truth of the matter is, this company is doing well cause you've got imaginative leadership, but you've also got great employees who are well-motivated, taken care of, inspired. And it's been my honor to meet some of your employees, and I look forward to answering some of your questions here in a minute.

I do want to thank the Governor of the State of Missouri for joining us. Governor Blunt, I'm proud you're here. Thank you for taking time out of your schedule. The Governor and I discussed the recent storms that have hit parts of Missouri. I assured him that we will stay in touch with his office and the emergency teams to make sure that if there needs to be a Federal response, we will be ready to give one. And obviously, for those who've lost their property today, we send our heartfelt condolences, and just want you to know that when natural disaster strikes, if the disaster is—merits it, there will be a ample and robust government response. So thanks for coming, Governor.

I'm also proud to be here with the United States Senator, Kit Bond from Missouri. Needless to say, he used his time on Air Force One to make sure I understood the issues that were facing the State of Missouri. We spent a little time talking about the Missouri River. And Todd Akin is with us too. Congressman, I'm proud you're here. Thanks for coming.

So we're getting economic news. There's a lot of data beginning to move. On Wednesday, the—they talked about the fact that the economy in the first quarter grew at 0.6 percent. That's the same as it grew in the fourth quarter of last year. That's not good enough for America. It's positive growth, but we can do better than that. Today there was another report out that showed that we lost 20,000 jobs last month, even though the unemployment rate dropped to 5 percent. In other words, the unemployment rate went down. And again, that's a sign that this economy is not as robust as any of us would like it.

The good news is, is that we anticipated this. Last fall, we started to get indications that the economy was going to slow down. And so I—believe it or not, you can actually work with Congress sometimes on—with people on both sides of the aisle, which is what we did; these two Members were incredibly constructive—to pass a stimulus package, progrowth package.

There's two aspects to that package I want to spend some time talking about. One of them is, is that you're going to get some money. It turns out, it's your own money, but you're going to get it back. [Laughter] Six hundred dollars per person, \$1,200 per couple, \$300 per child; a family of four will be getting a \$1,800 check. And the reason why—and by the way, it's going to affect 130 million families. And the reason why that is good policy, first of all, it's a temporary tax relief, recognizing that we're going to recover. And this is to help stimulate that recovery. Secondly, we wanted to make sure that people were encouraged to be consumers. We wanted there to be consumption in our society, and no better way to stimulate consumption than to let you have some of your own money back.

Thirdly, it turns out that this money is going to be very helpful in helping people deal with high energy prices and food price. I'm going to spend a little time on energy here in a minute.

And fourthly, it's big enough. In other words, we didn't want to make a political statement; we wanted to make a statement that will affect this economy. When you're affecting 130 million households, with over \$150 billion of progrowth package, it's going

to affect us positively. The experts say that beginning—toward the end of this quarter and the beginning of next quarter, we should see some positive signs as a result of the progrowth economic package.

Now, some of you are saying, “You think I’m ever going to see my money? We’ve heard ‘the check is in the mail’ deal before.” Well, it’s coming. They started hitting last Monday. And Secretary of the Treasury Paulson is on top of this, and so you’ll start seeing—if you’re not—if you didn’t get your money electronically, you’re going to start seeing it come in the check form.

And for those people in Missouri and around the Nation that do not file income taxes, you need to contact the local IRS office because you’re likely to be eligible. And therefore, you got to make sure you sign up for the program in order to get the money. We want you to get the money. And so if you’re involved in a church group that’s worried about helping people, then make sure that parishioners, or make sure people in the community centers understand that if you’re not a filer, you’re still eligible to get a check.

Now the other aspect of the program was to stimulate investment for companies like World Wide. In other words, there’s a—you can effect the Tax Code that provides incentives for the CEOs to say, “I think we need—we ought to buy some equipment.” And that’s important for a couple of reasons. One, it makes you more productive; it makes you more competitive; it gives the employees a better chance to keep this company on a cutting edge.

Secondly, somebody has to make that which you purchase. So if the Tax Code says it’s in your interest to buy a piece of equipment or to buy software or to buy something to make this company a better company, then somewhere in the economy somebody is going to make it for you. And that also creates jobs. There’s a ripple effect for using the Tax Code to stimulate investment.

I was talking to Dave and Jim, and they were telling me that the incentives built in the progrowth plan for businesses will—have—are causing them to make new investments for you that they may have put off for later years. And the effects of this aspect of the progrowth plan are beginning to kick

in as well. In other words, it’s just starting. We passed the deal in February.

The point I’m trying to tell you is, is that we worked well with Congress, and that the effects of a robust attempt to inject life hasn’t really kicked in yet. And I’m—if you believe these economists, if they had three hands they’d say, “On the one hand, on the other hand, and then on the third hand.” [*Laughter*] But we’ve got some smart folks around that are analyzing what this means, and they feel confident about it.

I’ve been—since I’ve been your President, I want to remind you, we have been through a recession; we have been through a terrorist attack; we have been at war; we have had corporate scandals; we have had major natural disasters, and yet this economy always recovers. We’re a resilient economy because we’ve got good, capable, smart, hard-working people in America. And I know it’s tough times, and I know you’re having to pay more at the fuel pump than you want, but this economy is going to come on. I’m confident it will. And I want to thank the folks at World Wide for being a part of the leading edge of optimism here in America and the leading edge in making sure that people can find good, hard—paying jobs.

Let me talk about energy very quickly. I’m fully aware that people are paying dearly at the pump. The other day at a press conference I said it’s like a tax; it’s a tax on you. The more that gasoline goes up, the more you’re paying for the pump, the less money you have in your pocket to spend for your family. I will tell you, it’s taken us awhile to get in this fix, and therefore, it’s going to take us awhile to get out of the fix. But I want to remind you that an energy policy that basically prohibits America from finding oil in our own land is an energy policy that has led to high gasoline prices.

When I first got to the Congress, I suggested that we have a comprehensive energy policy: one that recognizes the short-term effects of being reliant upon foreign oil; one that says we can use new technologies that will enable us to power our automobiles in different kinds of ways, using ethanol, for example, or battery technology; and one, ultimately, that will allow hydrogen to power the car.

So we worked well with Congress on the interim step. As you know, ethanol is beginning to take off. And I'm convinced we're going to be able to make ethanol out of something other than corn here relatively quickly, like wood chips or grasses grown in the desert, which will be very exciting for the American people. Hydrogen—we're doing a lot of research on your behalf to have hydrogen-powered automobiles, which means you're running on hydrogen, the waste product of which is water.

But in the meantime, in the short run, we didn't allow exploration for oil and gas in places like Alaska, our Outer Continental Shelf. And guess what happened? World demand exceeded supply, and now you're paying for it. If Congress truly is interested in helping relieve the price of gasoline, they would do two things. They would recognize that we can drill for oil and gas in environmentally friendly ways here in the United States, where there is good reserves. And they would build refineries; they would encourage the construction of refineries. Do you know that there hadn't been a new refinery built in America since 1976? No wonder there's constricted supplies. If you want more of something, in this case, you got to build the additional manufacturing capability. And so our gasoline supplies are restricted as well.

My attitude is, I understand the pain, but I also understand if we don't allow us to explore in environmentally friendly ways for oil and gas reserves in the United States of America, we'll remain dependent in the short term on foreign oil. And that's not good for us.

I want to talk about housing very quickly. The key to the housing market is for the market to adjust—you know, built too many houses. We just got to work through the system. But there's things Government should and can do that is responsible—mainly, is to help creditworthy people stay in their home. That's the best thing we can do, is to help somebody who is capable of paying the mortgage; and if they just need a little help to be able to stay in the home, is to help provide that help.

And here's the dilemma: If you got a—bought yourself a mortgage, in the old days when you—the originator of your mortgage,

like a savings and loan, was somebody that you could go and talk in the office, say, "Listen, man, I got a little bit of a problem. I'm in a bind. I need a little help on my interest payment. Or, can you extend my note out a little bit?" The originator of the mortgage, the guy who loaned you the money, still owned the paper. In this day and age, the person that loaned you the money for the mortgage may not own the mortgage anymore.

And so we came together—the Treasury Department and groups that help people understand the mortgage market and refinancing experts—and put together what's called the HOPE NOW Alliance, which enables people to go and renegotiate loans. That's what we want to do. We want to help people stay in their homes. The market is going to correct. And what we want to do is to say, here's a way for you to stay in your home. They go to these lenders, big lenders and say, look, just help them out a little bit—delay interest or renegotiate the interest rates or extend the payments. We've helped about 1,400,000 homeowners stay in their homes.

I know there's all kinds of proposals coming out of Congress. I mean, one such proposal was: Why don't you use your money to buy empty houses? Well, that doesn't help the person who's no longer in the house. That may help the lender; that may help the speculator. I'm interested in helping the homeowner. So I—we'll work with Congress on legislation, but in my judgment, the best kind of legislation focuses on the person that actually owns the home.

Now, look, some people were in there speculating. I don't think Government ought to help speculators. And Government—you know, the truth of the matter is, some folks probably shouldn't have tried to buy a home in the first place. But there's a lot of good, creditworthy people; they just need a little relief to stay in the home.

The other thing I'm worried about is these reset mortgages. What I'm very concerned about is somebody went out and got them a mortgage, and the person that sold them the mortgage said, "Boy, this is a good, low interest rate for you." They forgot to tell them the second half: that in a couple of years, it's going to bump up. These resets,

as you know, you buy a low interest rate, and you get on the paper, and then by a couple of years later, all of a sudden, the interest rate booms up.

And I'm—what I'm really concerned about is fraudulent tactics that didn't tell people that didn't really quite understand what was going on the full story. And it's a Federal responsibility to make sure if that stuff goes on, people are held to account. We don't want people being cheated in America.

The other thing that the Government can do is to reform what's called these GSEs. These are big government-backed lending institutions. And we can reform them and get them focused on their core mission, which is to help the mortgage industry move forward, help people in homes.

And finally, another interesting idea is to let the States' housing authorities issue tax-free bonds, which will then provide more money for refinancing.

Finally, I do want to talk about trade. It's an interesting subject here in America. There's a lot of people who say, "Trade is bad for our country. We shouldn't be a nation that opens up markets"; that's what they're saying. Unless, of course, you're a Missouri farmer who's selling your product into foreign markets. Unless, of course, you're World Wide Technology, which is expanding in a robust way and is looking for new markets. By the way, it's in your interests if you're working for World Wide that markets be open. If you're good at what you're doing—and you are, obviously; otherwise you wouldn't be successful—then trade policy ought to make it easier for you to enter foreign markets.

All I want is for America to be treated the way we treat other nations. I think that's a reasonable thing to ask. And so let me talk about the Colombia free trade agreement. You might have been reading about that lately. It's one of these issues that has created consternation, at least in Washington. Most goods from Colombia come into the United States duty free. That's a result of long-standing congressional policy. Most of our goods and services are taxed going into Colombia. Most goods coming here come in duty free; most goods produced in the United States or services like yours pay a tar-

iff. That means a tax. It's more expensive. It's harder to get into the market because what you charge is upped by tax.

I think it makes sense to have Congress say, "We want Colombia to treat us just the way we treat Colombia." It turns out, 9,000 businesses export into Colombia in the United States, 8,000 of which are small and midsized businesses. Isn't that interesting? Many of the people benefiting, people working for companies that export into Colombia, work for small businesses and medium-sized businesses.

But Congress doesn't see it that way right now. A lot of Members of Congress do, but they have absolutely shut down the vote on the Colombia free trade agreement. And I think it's irresponsible. If you're worried about the state of the economy, we ought to be opening up markets, not shutting down markets. We ought to be insisting we're treated fairly.

And I'll tell you another problem. In not moving the Colombia free trade agreement, we are turning our back on a very strong ally of the United States of America. There's a President of Colombia named Uribe, and he's got a tough situation down there because he's dealing with what's called FARC, which is an extremist group that uses drug dollars to perpetuate violence and to move their products mainly to here. And here's a man who says, "I'm going to deal with them, and I'm going to be tough with them." And then all of a sudden, the United States Congress turns its back on him. What kind of message is that?

And so I'm—I strongly urge the Congress to understand that opening up markets is good for our economy. But I also strongly urge the Congress to understand—whether it would be Colombia or Panama or Korea—that we can't be turning our backs on our allies. This is good economics, and it's good national security.

Those are some of the things on my mind. I've got a lot on my mind, by the way. [Laughter] Getting ready to march down the aisle and—[laughter].

What I thought I'd do is answer some questions, any question, any topic. I've been around long enough to dodge them if I can't

figure out the answer. *[Laughter]* I can ask myself one.

Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman—oh, Mr. President. Fine. *[Laughter]*

Health Care

Q. So as Dave mentioned, we're doing very well as a company. Had a very good first quarter, best first quarter ever. Last year, last 3 years, we've grown about 29 percent. One of the challenges that we have is managing the cost of health care. So with all of our employees here, can you give some of your thoughts in regards to how do we manage the continuing increased cost of health care?

The President. Absolutely. In essence, there's two paths. One is for the Government to basically make most of the decisions. In other words, say, we're going to make sure you have health care, and we'll make sure it's available for you. And the problem with that system is they basically make decisions for you.

I happen to believe in private medicine. I think it is by far the best route to go because private medicine has made American health care the best in the world. I don't care what people tell you, America's health care is on the leading edge of change, and our American people get really good health care.

Now the question is, who pays for it? The question is, is it available and is it affordable? And so the approach I've taken is to, one, remember the most important element in any system is the buyer, is the consumer, is the customer. That would be you, if you're a patient. And therefore, the policies that I've articulated have been all aimed at empowering you to have more decisionmaking in the health care system, so as to help deal with costs. If there's no decisionmaking in the system—in other words, there's no shopping; there's no consumerism—price goes up. It's just—it's an economic fact.

And so I'm a strong believer in health savings accounts. I don't know if you have them here, but they are very empowering instruments. They let you make the decisions. They let you save when you don't spend money. They let you roll the money over tax-free. They let you pull it out tax-free for medical care. It's your money, and it grows.

The other thing is, is that it's portable. When you go from one job to the next, it follows you. So I think it's a very important aspect in a society in which, if you're under 30 years old, you're likely to have worked for seven or eight jobs. In other words, this is a very highly mobile workplace we have now.

Secondly, if you're a small business, you ought to be allowed to pool risk, just like big companies can do. But you ought to be able to do it across jurisdictional boundaries. That's fancy words for, if you're a restaurant in Missouri, you ought to be able to put your employees in a risk pool with a restaurant in Texas. The larger the risk pool—in other words, the more people involved in the insurance—the less price goes up, the easier it is for somebody to find affordable product. But now it's against the law to do that. So small businesses ought to be allowed to pool risk. That's what big companies do. And I believe we ought to treat World Wide just like—give World Wide the same advantages in the marketplace that big companies get to do. Those are called association health plans.

The Tax Code is discriminatory. It says that if you work for a company, you get tax benefits. If you don't, you don't get tax benefits. If you're a very small company trying to provide health care, the Tax Code discriminates against your employees. We ought to change the Tax Code. We ought to treat everybody the same in the Tax Code, all aiming to drive the establishment of an individual market so that people can better afford health care.

Now, look, we spend a lot of money, by the way, on people who need help. My view of America is that we're rich enough to take care of people who can't help themselves, and we do. We got a robust Medicare system, which, by the way, my administration reformed for the first time since Lyndon Johnson—substantially reformed it since Lyndon Johnson was the President. And now you get a prescription drug benefit. So for all you guys my age, get yourself a prescription drug benefit pretty soon. *[Laughter]*

We take care of the—through Medicaid—community health centers all throughout the country, and we're expanding them so that

people can get primary care in a place other than an emergency room.

Thirdly, there needs to be transparency in pricing. How many of you ever asked a doctor how much something costs? Have you ever shopped? And the answer is, no, you likely haven't. It's because the system—somebody else pays your bill in a third-party payer system. And so when somebody else pays the bill, there is no incentive to worry about cost. "Hey, what do I care? Somebody else is paying the bill," you think, until your benefit structure starts to change because of inflation in the health care system.

And so the whole purpose is to have transparency in the system. One of the things we're doing—you know, we're a big purchaser of health care, thanks to you—like, veterans, Medicare, Medicaid. And so we're now saying that if you participate with the Government, post price. Let people see what the different prices are. Post quality ratings; it's nice to know if you're a consumer, isn't it, whether or not you got a—whether or not somebody you're thinking about paying has got a good record.

The other thing is, is that one of the real cost drivers—there are other cost drivers I want to discuss—so in other words, consumerism helps deal with cost. Transparency helps deal with cost. This is a system in which there's been no cost consciousness whatsoever.

Thirdly, there—information technology—the best way to describe this in health care is that people are still taking handwritten files, putting them under their arms, and delivering it from one office to the next. And that means oftentimes there's medical errors because the files get lost. Doctors can't write very clearly anyway. And so you—something gets illegible.

Most industries—your industry is using high-tech to modernize. There's a lot of cost efficiencies that can be wrung out of the system by the advent of information technology. The dream is that someday you've got a medical record, your own medical record—by the way, tamper-proof; in other words, protected—that you can use from one office to the next. It's a sign that efficiencies in the system have taken hold.

I'll tell you an interesting story about that. The Veterans Administration in New Orleans was clobbered during Katrina. And so you had a lot of veterans leaving the New Orleans area—many of them going to Houston, for example—but they had electronic medical records. It turns out, the Veterans Affairs is generally ahead of the rest of the field. And all they did was take their chip and they plugged it into the computers in Houston, and the whole medical records was available. That's—not only it's good for the customer, the patient, but what I'm telling you is, it'll help wring out the inefficiencies in the system. Health care is an inefficient system right now.

And finally—it's a long answer, sorry. [Laughter] I've thought a lot about it. [Laughter] I've analyzed what's best on how to deal with this. It's a very—it's a tough issue for you, and it's a tough issue for small businesses. It's a tough issue. But one of the cost drivers, just so you know, is lawsuits. And if you're an attorney, I don't mean to be stepping on your toe. Well, everybody needs a good attorney, you know—particularly me, since I'm getting sued all the time. But it's a—[laughter]—I think I am.

If you're a doctor and you're afraid you're going to get sued, you practice additional medicine. It's called defensive medicine. You prescribe tests and procedures and perhaps medications that really may not be necessary, but are necessary if you're getting sued, and the suit could drive you out of business. I—and therefore, I'm a big believer in medical liability reform. If you've got an egregious suit, you should be able to take it to the courthouse.

But it's these junk lawsuits that are doing two things around America. They're running good doctors out of practice. I mean, people say, "I can't afford liability insurance," and when they can, they're going to pass it on to you in higher bills. But since you're not paying the bills, somebody else is, it's okay by you. The problem is it's part of a cost driver. It's making medicine more expensive than it should be.

I really think, at the core of this issue, America has got to be very careful about what kind of health care system to embrace. It's

essential that we not undermine private medicine. If you really think about the health care advances in America relative to the rest of the world, they've been phenomenal. And to me it's that entrepreneurial spirit that's important to maintain on the kind of forefront here in America, and at the same time, make sure we've got a rational approach to health care. There's a long answer to a short question.

Any other questions?

Yes, sir. Everybody gets nervous. I used to hate to ask questions in class. [Laughter] Then they'd call on me. [Laughter]

Domestic Agenda/War on Terror

Q. I have a statement and a question.

The President. Okay.

Q. First of all, I want to thank you for encouraging World Wide to sell more CISCO equipment. [Laughter] As an employee at CISCO, we greatly appreciate it.

The President. Yes. There's a marketing genius. [Laughter] The guy has got the national TV cameras on him, and he's going to leave here on his cell phone and say, "Hey, boss, did you see me on C-SPAN?" [Laughter]

Q. And the question is, outside of the economy, what do you see as your single biggest domestic challenge through the end of your term?

The President. The biggest domestic challenge is to protect America from attack. That's the biggest domestic challenge.

I wish I didn't have to say that. You know, it's—but that's reality. The President doesn't have the luxury of dealing with the world the way he wished it was. My job is to do everything I can to rally forces to protect you. And I never thought I would be a war President; never wanted to be a war President. Didn't campaign in 2000 saying, I'm going to be a war President. The interesting thing about life is that sometimes you get dealt a hand you didn't expect—oftentimes you do. And the question isn't whether you get dealt the hand; the question is, how do you play it? And here's how I'm playing it.

First, I expect the Congress to give our professionals all the tools they need to protect you again. Let me just start—let me just take a step back. There must be some in the

country who don't believe that the enemy is a threat. I just completely disagree with you. And I would remind people, since September the 11th, a day which affected me deeply, there have been a lot of attacks on innocent people by extremists who use murder as a tool to advance their ideology.

The Government—and this is—the reason I say it's the biggest domestic challenge is because it's our most important responsibility. I mean, there's a lot of important issues, but protecting the people is by far the most important thing. It's the thing I think about the most. This is a different kind of war, and it's hard for some Americans to get their hands around it.

This is a war where we're dealing with non-state actors. World War II, there was Germany and Japan and Italy. Cold war, there's a big standoff between the Soviet and the United States. There is no nation involved in this war. These are people who, however, share an ideology. Just think about what life was like in Afghanistan under the Taliban with Al Qaida driving the agenda. This is where girls have no rights. You can't worship freely. This is a very dark, grim vision that they believe they must spread far and wide. That's what they think.

And they—one way they achieve their objectives, of course, is to intimidate by death. There's no rules with these people. There's just—so America has got to understand that in order to find them, we've got to get in their heads. If you're facing a nation, you can find the nation. If you're facing people that bury in failed states, you've got to understand how to find them.

One of the interesting debates in Washington, DC, is whether or not we ought to be using modern technologies to understand how this enemy thinks and to get in and figure out what they're planning. And a lot of times that comes over communications companies. The way I put it, just so people can understand in plain English: If Al Qaida is making a phone call into the United States of America, we better know why; if you're interested in protecting an attack and there's a dirty number being called, the Government of the United States better understand the intentions and why that phone call is being made. And so—and we had that bill passed,

thanks to Senator Bond, and yet, curiously enough, the Congress decided to allow the bill to expire. It's called the Protect America Act. And now the Protect America Act is expired, as if the enemy has gone away.

And so—I—one huge issue for us is to make sure that the American people understand the facts. You see, what's happened is, is that these phone companies which have allegedly helped the United States monitor conversations are now being sued for billions of dollars of lawsuits. Isn't that interesting? All I'm asking for is the Congress to provide liability protection for patriotic companies that are serving to help you. And yet we can't get them to do it. They're not going to let it vote. They passed it out of the Senate—Kit did a really good job of working with his Democrat counterpart—and they buried that bill in the House of Representatives.

And this is bad for America. I'm telling you, if you expect me to do my job, you better make sure Congress gives our professionals the tools. And we can do this, by the way, in a way that, I promises you, guarantees your civil liberties. We just shouldn't be extending the same liberties to you—to a bunch of thugs that want to murder the American people.

This is another long answer. *[Laughter]* But it's very important for you to understand my thinking. I spend a lot of time on this issue, as you can imagine. Secondly—aspect—so in other words, we'll give our professionals tools. We got a lot of really good people working. We meet all the time; governments meeting constantly, ferreting out any information.

And by the way, just so you know, we're picking up people on the battlefield, and the battlefield is varied. I mean, we're finding Al Qaida in Iraq. That's—they're trying to kill people in Iraq to drive us out. We're finding them in remote regions of Afghanistan. And a lot of times, they're carrying computers. And so you say, "Where do you get numbers?" We're getting them off the computers of the people we're capturing or bringing to justice. And if there's a phone number on one of those computers of one of these thugs and it links to a phone number somewhere in America, I really think it's in our interest to find out why.

The other thing is just to keep the pressure on them. It's hard to plot and plan if you're moving, if there's enormous pressure, which really is important that we deny safe haven. You hear a lot of discussion about safe haven. Well, safe haven means that these non-state actors are able to find breathing space to be able to plot. And they're sophisticated. You know, 19 kids on 3 airplanes, it's a sophisticated operation—4 airplanes, excuse me. This is a sophisticated operation. And they're good communicators. These people are—they're a tough enemy.

And so we're pressuring all the time. You probably read your newspaper today. I can understand if you didn't, but you probably—*[laughter]*—there's—well, anyway, there was a strike in Somalia, and the headline says "Al Qaida operative." We're constantly trying to find these people before they hurt you and pressuring all the time.

Finally—and by the way, Afghanistan was denial of a safe haven, and—as well as I saw an existential threat, as did most of Congress, in Saddam Hussein. I understand there's a lot of looking back, but getting rid of Saddam Hussein was the right thing.

And now the question is, will we help the 50 million people in Afghanistan and in Iraq that we liberated realize the blessings of freedom? I'm telling you, it's essential that we do so. This is an ideological war. The people we face have an ideology. Those that came and killed nearly 3,000 citizens on our soil, in the largest attack in American history on U.S. soil, believe something, and so do we.

We believe in human rights and human dignity. We believe in the right to a person to worship or not worship and be equally American. We say loud and clear, "It doesn't matter whether you're Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, don't believe in anything, you're equally American." They say, "We'll kill you if you don't worship the way we tell you to." And so it's the advance of liberty and freedom which will ultimately achieve the peace we want for our children.

Someday an American President is going to be saying, this is not that big an issue anymore. But it's going to take an ideology to spread. And so when you see hopelessness

as an American President, you got to understand that the only way these thugs can recruit is when they find hopeless people. I mean, who wants to be a suicide bomber except a hopeless person. You notice none of the leaders ever become suicide bombers, by the way. [Laughter]

And so it's—so what you're watching is, you're watching democracy unfold. And some say, "It's not worth it. Who cares how they live?" I'm telling you that we better care how people live. That's why, for example, the HIV/AIDS initiative in Africa is a cornerstone of Bush foreign policy; or helping moms whose little babies are needlessly dying because of mosquito bites is a cornerstone of Bush foreign policy; just like helping Afghan citizens and Iraqi citizens realize the blessings of a free society is a cornerstone of my policy—because in all cases, we're helping people deal with hopelessness. And it's worth it, and it's necessary.

And I operate on this principle—it's a cornerstone principle: I believe in an Almighty, and I believe a gift of that Almighty to every man, woman, and child—every man, woman, and child—is freedom. That's what I believe. I believe deep—[applause]. And if you believe that and you happen to be the President of the most influential nation, shouldn't you use the influence to help people realize the blessings of freedom? And that's what you're watching happen. And it's going to happen, unless, of course, America grows tired and weary, unless we say, it's not worth it, and we become isolationist and protectionist.

And so, to answer your question—I thank you for giving me a chance to share that with you—it's a big issue for the American people. It's a—what you just asked about is a really important thing for our people to understand. We've been in ideological struggles before.

Let me end—finish this really long answer with—[laughter]—I want to tell you something interesting about my Presidency. One of my best buddies in this war against extremists was the Prime Minister of Japan, Prime Minister Koizumi. You might remember, he's the guy that Laura and I took to Elvis's shop, Elvis's place in Memphis. [Laughter] People go, "So what? So what's the big deal? Other Presidents have had rela-

tions with the Japanese Prime Minister." Yes, but other Presidents haven't necessarily been in this kind of struggle before.

And my dad fought the Japanese. That's what's interesting. Just like many of your relatives did. They were the sworn enemy of the United States of America. If you think back to 1940—forties, midforties, if you'd have thought an American President would stand up and say, "My close buddy in dealing with the threats to our countries would be the Prime Minister of Japan," they'd say, "Man, you're nuts, hopelessly idealistic." Except the truth is, 60 years after 19-year-old Navy fighter pilot George H.W. Bush took off on a mission serving his country, his son sits down with Prime Minister Koizumi talking about how we can spread freedom as the great alternative to these jihadists that kill. And I have found that to be one of the really ironic twists of history.

What happened between 41—that's what they call the old man, 41; I'm the 43d President, 43—something happened. Democracy took hold. What I'm telling you is, liberty is transformative. Freedom is powerful. And if you believe in the universality of freedom, then it makes sense to encourage others to realize the blessings of freedom for the sake of peace.

Any other questions? Look, you can tell, I can talk all day long. [Laughter]

Yes, sir. Name—[laughter]—in case I'm a talk show host afterwards, you know? [Laughter]

Price of Food

Q. [Inaudible]—I'm Japanese.

The President. And American?

Q. Yes.

The President. Well, then you're American first.

Q. That's right. [Laughter] Good point. And I ask this partly because I'm hungry, but your thoughts on rising food prices?

The President. Yes, thank you. [Laughter] By the way, that's a polite way of saying, "Hey, man, how about cutting it short." [Laughter]

You know, it's a very interesting debate that's taking place. There's two aspects of rising food prices: one, how it affects our own

citizens. And again, I'm—we're spending billions of dollars on people who can't afford food, and that's good. We don't have a scarcity issue in America, interestingly enough; we got a price issue. Our shelves aren't going empty; it's just costing more money. And it's why, for example, we've expanded Women and Infants with Children's program, to make sure we can help the poor.

Secondly, there is scarcity in the world, and I happen to believe when we find people who can't find food, we ought to help them find it. I just told you why. There's nothing more hopeless than to be a mom wondering whether or not their child is going to get food the next day. And so I announced a major initiative.

By the way, just so you know, America is by far the most generous nation when it comes to helping the hungry. No contest. We're an unbelievably compassionate nation. And so I asked Congress to put some more money out. It will be over—it's about \$5 billion, over a 2-year period of time, of food. Now, keep in mind, we're spending about 19 billion here at home.

Secondly, I think we ought to change our food policy in Africa and other third—developing countries. I think we ought to be buying food directly from farmers as opposed to giving people food. I think we ought to be saying, why don't we help you be able to deal with scarcity by encouraging your farmers to grow and be efficient growers. Otherwise, we're going to be in this cycle forever.

Now, let me talk about price. As you know, I'm an ethanol person. I believe, as I told you, the interim step to getting away from oil and gas is to go to ethanol and battery technologies for your automobiles. I think it makes sense for America to be growing energy. I'd much rather be paying our farmers when we go to the gas pump than paying some nation that may not like us.

And so—but most of ethanol now—or nearly all of ethanol now is produced as a result of corn. And the price of corn is real high now. And so people say, "Well, it's your renewable fuels policy that is causing the price of food to go up." I've looked at this issue a lot. Actually, the reason why food prices are high now is because, one, energy

costs are high. And if you're a farmer, you're going to pass on your cost of energy in the product you sell. Otherwise, you go broke. And when you're paying more for your diesel, paying more for your fertilizer, because it's got a lot of natural gas in it—in other words, when your basic costs are going up, so does the cost of food.

Worldwide there is increasing demand. There turns out to be prosperity in developing world, which is good. It's going to be good for you, because you'll be selling products into countries—big countries perhaps—and it's hard to sell products into countries that aren't prosperous. In other words, the more prosperous the world is, the more opportunity there is.

It also, however, increases demand. So, for example, just as an interesting thought for you, there are 350 million people in India who are classified as middle class. That's bigger than America. Their middle class is larger than our entire population. And when you start getting wealth, you start demanding better nutrition and better food. And so demand is high, and that causes the price to go up.

And finally, there's been weather-related problems. Some of the major producers of food have had drought. That's what happens. Weather patterns change. And so there's a lot of reasons why the price of food is high. And no question that ethanol has had a part of it, but I simply do not subscribe to the notion that it is the main cost driver for your food going up.

Anyway, it's a good question. You don't look hungry. [Laughter]

Yes.

President's Legacy/Faith-Based and Community Organizations

Q. First off, I would like to thank you for—[inaudible].

The President. Thank you.

Q. Secondly, maybe on a more lighter note, what are your plans after you—[inaudible]?

The President. Thank you. Yes. I'm heading home. I tell people that, first of all, it's been a huge honor to serve the country, and I'm really glad I did. And I thank the American people for giving me a chance to serve.

It's—as you can imagine, it's been a remarkable experience.

A couple of points on that—what's probably counterintuitive to you is that this has been a great experience for our family. I've lived in the White House now for 7½ years, and the furniture is interesting—[*laughter*]—but it's like a museum. [*Laughter*] And there's love in that White House, thanks to a good wife. She's great. Laura is a—[*ap- plause*]—which is one of the reasons this has been a fabulous experience.

You know, obviously, there's some good days and some bad days. I feel so strongly about my principles and my values, and I'm an optimistic guy, that what may appear to be really difficult to deal with—like my buddies from Midland, Texas—that, for me, it's just part of the job. Interestingly enough, it is a lot harder to have been the son of the President than to be the President.

And so it's been a joyous experience. You know, one of the great, really fun things we do is we welcome our pals from west Texas to the White House, and they come to the Oval Office. They're walking around; they say, “Man, I can't believe I'm here.” And then they take a look at me—[*laughter*].

So the first thing is, I'm heading home. I came from Texas with a set of values, and I'm going to go home with the same set of values. In order to be making consistent decisions in this complex world, you can't be shifting your principles in order to be the popular guy. I guess I'll go home and mow the lawn. I don't—[*laughter*]

I'm interested in promoting the whole—what I talked to you about—the whole philosophy behind the freedom agenda. I think it's going to be very important to be kept in the forefront of American philosophical thought. And I'm going to build a Presidential library at SMU. It's where Laura went to university, there in Dallas. And I'd like to have a think tank. This isn't a political precinct. This will be a place where we get the thinkers from around the world to come and write about and articulate the transformative power of freedom, abroad and at home.

One of the initiatives that I'm very proud of is the interface between government and faith-based and community groups. I believe that government ought to empower people

who have been called to serve for reasons other than just government law. And there are thousands, by the way, of social entrepreneurs all throughout the country, little healers and helpers that just can make a difference in somebody's lives. And I think it's in our interests to empower groups through the use of your—taxpayers' money, without using your money to proselytize. And let me give you an example.

If you're a drug addict or a heavy boozier, sometimes it requires more than a psychological counseling session to convince you to quit. As a matter of fact, a lot of people have turned to a higher power, which is not part of a government program. And so I strongly support taxpayers' money going to an individual that seeks help and allowing that person, if he or she so chooses, to seek the redemptive power of a higher being as part of a government program.

And so I'd like to—and that's something else I'd like to foster. But other than that, I mean, that's as far as I've—I got a lot to do. I mean, I really do have a lot to do. It's—which makes the job exciting.

Now that you didn't ask, I'll tell you something interesting about—so if you walk in the Oval Office, I hope you'd be struck by a beautiful rug that's there. And so I was getting ready to be sworn in as President. And we're at the Blair House, which is right across the street from the White House. And as you can imagine, it was a slightly nerve-wracking moment, when I was preparing the Inaugural Address to be sworn in as your President. And the guy calls and says, “Like, you're supposed to pick the rug.” I said, “Huh?” [*Laughter*] He said, “So you're supposed to pick the color rug you want in the Oval Office.” And the first lesson there is, when you're short on a subject—and I'm short on rugs—delegate. [*Laughter*]

And I think it's going to be very important, as you pay attention to the Presidential race, to try to come up with not only who you agree with, obviously, but whether that person knows how to delegate, knows how to set up a structure so that good information can make it into the Oval Office in a way that enables good decisionmaking. The temptation, of course, is to walk in the Oval Office and say, “Oh, man, you're looking

beautiful.” And the President doesn’t need somebody—because generally he’s not looking beautiful. The President needs somebody to walk in and say, “Here’s what I think.”

So when you think about good, solid advisers—at least in my case—think about somebody like Condoleezza Rice or Hank Paulson, who used to run Goldman Sachs, or Bob Gates. These are strong, capable people. And my job is to make sure that the environment is such that they can walk in and say, “Mr. President, here’s what I’m thinking; here’s my advice.” And their job, by the way, once the President makes up his mind, is say, “Yes, sir, Mr. President.” [Laughter] And so in this case, I delegated to Laura. [Laughter] And I should—and it’s—and by the way, it’s not “Yes, sir, Mr. President,” it’s—[laughter]—“Yes, ma’am, First Lady.” [Laughter]

I said—here’s an interesting lesson about the Presidency and life in general if you’re delegating. I said to Laura—I said, “I want the rug to say ‘optimistic person comes to work.’” I didn’t say, “Here are the colors.” In other words, I left the tactics to her, and the strategic thought was mine. The strategic thought is—behind that is that you can’t possibly lead unless you’re optimistic that tomorrow is going to be better. And just so you know, I hope at least one thing you come away from this is, I am absolutely optimistic, in my very soul and very core, that in the defense of America, we’re laying the foundation for peace.

And so the rug looks like the sun. And you walk in, man, I’m telling you, it is optimistic. [Laughter] It’s a fabulous rug.

Yes.

Faith-Based and Community Organizations/Pope Benedict XVI/President’s Visit to Romania

Q. I just want to start by saying that my mom prays for you every day.

The President. Yes. Thank you.

Q. All right. I’m Dan Buck. I’m with St. Patrick’s Center, and we help end homelessness for thousands of folks in St. Louis.

The President. There you go.

Q. But your Faith-Based and Community Initiative has truly broken down walls be-

tween government and faith-based organizations.

The President. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Q. We have grown from 4 million to 12 million. We serve more people more effectively because of that partnership. How do we grow it after your administration? Will this continue, and is there plans in place that the FBCI will continue?

The President. Well, thank you for asking that, and thanks for your kind words. It’s just going to be very important for organizations that understand the power and the leverage that can be gained by the use of money that could be going elsewhere to stay in the program. It’s going to require Governors to open up faith-based offices, as well, and just get it ingrained in the system. And then your elected officials have to understand how powerful this has been. It’s—again it recognize—there’s some great Federal programs, some State programs, but there’s a lot of programs that are really effective that can be helped by empowering individuals to have a script or money that they can redeem at their services.

And so thanks for saying—are you a Catholic? Yes. So here’s one of the great moments of the Presidency: the Holy Father coming to the South Lawn. I’m telling you, it was a magnificent moment. It’s the largest crowd we’ve ever had on the South Lawn. And it was really interesting, from this Methodist’s perspective, was to watch the reaction for our fellow citizens to His Holy Father. And it was a magnificent moment. The day—it was a beautiful day, and the Army choir sang “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” that was just great. Anyway, we had a wonderful trip, and it was such an honor.

I mean, you get to do some fabulous things as President. You asked about the—and one of them is welcoming the Holy Father to the south ground of the White House. You know, we—Laura and I went out to Andrews Air Force Base to see him, and then his first public event was there, and then he went on from there for the rest of his trip.

I was—you know, representing our country has been a fabulous—I want to conclude by one story, and then I got to—I’m heading

out of here. And this guy is hungry. [*Laughter*] So am I. Yes. [*Laughter*]

I'm going to tell you an interesting story about this experience in—so I was going to Bucharest, Romania. Romania had just been admitted into NATO. And the big deal there for the Romanian citizens that had come under the—come out from underneath the clutch of a brutal dictator named Ceausescu was, if you're a member of NATO, there's a clause that says, "An attack on one is an attack on all." In essence, if there's—they gets the—they have the United States of America, the great United States of America, as somebody to help them, as an ally. And that's really important for a lot of countries. And they had just been accepted into NATO, and the President asked me and Laura to go. And there was 225,000 people, more or less, in the town square to see the American President, and it was raining.

Now, the interesting thing from my perspective was that I was here, and there was a balcony lit in the town square, and I was told this was where the tyrant Ceausescu and his wife had made their last public appearance. And the story has it that he—somebody started chanting, "Liar," and he realized his power was slipping away, and then he tried to get out of there. And anyway, he was done in by the people. They were tired of him. He was a brutal guy.

And so that was my line of sight. And the President introduced me, and just as I got up to speak, a full rainbow appeared. And it was a startling moment. And I turned back—Laura was like from me to you back there—I went, "Look, baby, look up there." And so when I pointed up, 225,000 heads whipped around to look at the rainbow. I then ad-libbed, "God is smiling on Bucharest." And the reason I did is because the rainbow ended right behind the balcony where the tyrant had given his last speech. Liberty is transformative, and it will yield the peace we want.

Thanks for coming by. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:11 a.m. at World Wide Technology, Inc. In his remarks, he referred to David L. Steward, chairman of the board, James P. Kavanaugh, chief executive officer, and Joseph G. Koenig, president, World Wide Technology, Inc; President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Co-

lombia; and former President Ion Iliescu of Romania.

Message on the Observance of Cinco de Mayo, 2008

May 2, 2008

I send greetings to those celebrating Cinco de Mayo.

Cinco de Mayo is a joyful day in Mexican history and an important milestone in the history of freedom. On May 5, 1862, an outnumbered band of Mexican soldiers defeated a large European power against overwhelming odds at the Battle of Puebla. Emboldened by victory and yearning for independence, Mexican patriots ultimately won independence on September 16, 1867. Today, we remember these heroic accomplishments and all those working to advance peace and liberty around the globe.

This holiday is also an opportunity to recognize the strong ties of family, economy, and culture that bind the United States and Mexico. Through a shared commitment to economic liberty and the universal right of freedom, the United States and Mexico continue to build a future of prosperity and opportunity for all people.

Laura and I send our best wishes. *Que Dios los bendiga.*

George W. Bush

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this message. An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Proclamation 8251—National Charter Schools Week, 2008

May 2, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Education is the cornerstone of a hopeful tomorrow. During National Charter Schools Week, we highlight the contributions of charter schools to ensuring that our Nation's future leaders have the skills and knowledge necessary for a lifetime of achievement.

Charter schools are educational alternatives that empower families with additional choices for their children. By providing flexibility to educators while insisting on results, charter schools are helping foster a culture of educational innovation, accountability, and excellence. Charter schools also encourage parental involvement and help contribute to the national effort to close the achievement gap.

The No Child Left Behind Act has played a central role in America's efforts to improve our public schools and expand the opportunities available to our children. In 2007, American students reached record achievement levels on reading and math tests, and the achievement gap is beginning to close. Charter schools have been an important part of this success. National Charter Schools Week is an opportunity to recognize the strength, vitality, and excellence of outstanding schools.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 4 through May 10, 2008, as National Charter Schools Week. I applaud our Nation's charter schools and all those who make them a success, and I call on parents of charter school students to share their success stories and help Americans understand more about the important work of charter schools.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., May 6, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 7.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting a Request for Fiscal Year 2009 Supplemental Appropriations for Ongoing Military and Intelligence Operations and Selected Other International Activities

May 2, 2008

Dear Madam Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed amendments to my FY 2009 Budget that provide the necessary resources for ongoing military and intelligence operations, as well as foreign assistance activities in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. They also provide the necessary resources for selected other international activities that advance our national security, including food assistance to address the global food crisis.

These amendments distribute by account \$70 billion of discretionary budget authority included as an allowance in my FY 2009 Budget for the Global War on Terror. This amount is already factored into the FY 2009 Budget projections and would not increase the deficit.

I hereby designate the specific proposals in the amounts requested herein as emergency requirements. This request represents urgent and essential requirements. The details of the request are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

April 26

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

April 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with American Legion national commander Martin F. Conaster.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Bush will travel to Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt from May 13–18.

April 29

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced his intention to nominate Eric J. Boswell to be Assistant Secretary of State (Diplomatic Security) and Director of the Office of Foreign Missions with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patricia McMahon Hawkins to be Ambassador to Togo.

The President announced his intention to designate William W. Park as a member of the Panel of Arbitrators of the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes.

April 30

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a photo opportunity with the 2008 National and State Teachers of the Year.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland. Later, he traveled to Fairfax, VA, arriving in the evening.

Later in the evening, at a private residence, the President attended a National Republican Congressional Committee reception. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

May 1

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Martin Torrijos Espino of Panama to the White House on May 6.

The President announced his intention to nominate Liliana Ayalde to be Ambassador to Paraguay.

The President announced his intention to nominate Tatiana C. Gfoeller-Volkoff to be Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sean Joseph Stackley to be Assistant Secretary for the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition.

The President announced his intention to appoint Martin J. Dannenfelser, Jr., as Staff Director of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

The President announced his intention to designate Gregory G. Katsas as Acting Assistant Attorney General (Civil Division) at the Department of Justice.

May 2

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to St. Louis, MO, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Jerron Johnson. He then travelled to Maryland Heights, MO, where he toured World Wide Technology, Inc.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Withdrawn April 28

George A. Krol, of New Jersey, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Turkmenistan, which was sent to the Senate on June 27, 2007.

Submitted April 29

Eric J. Boswell, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Diplomatic Security), vice Richard J. Griffin, resigned.

Eric J. Boswell,
of the District of Columbia, to be Director
of the Office of Foreign Missions, and to
have the rank of Ambassador during his ten-
ure of service, vice Richard J. Griffin, re-
signed.

Paul G. Gardephe,
of New York, to be U.S. District Judge for
the Southern District of New York, vice
Charles L. Briant, retired.

Patricia McMahon Hawkins,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior
Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be
Ambassador Extraordinary and Pleni-
potentiary of the United States of America
to the Togolese Republic.

Clark Waddoups,
of Utah, to be U.S. District Judge for the
District of Utah, vice Paul G. Cassell, re-
signed.

Submitted April 30

Michael M. Anello,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for
the Southern District of California, vice Na-
poleon A. Jones, retired.

Submitted May 1

Liliana Ayalde,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior
Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor,
to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Pleni-
potentiary of the United States of America
to the Republic of Paraguay.

Tatiana C. Gfoeller-Volkoff,
of the District of Columbia, a career member
of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Coun-
selor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary of the United States of
America to the Kyrgyz Republic.

Steven C. Preston,
of Illinois, to be Secretary of Housing and
Urban Development, vice Alphonso R. Jack-
son, resigned.

Sean Joseph Stackley,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of
the Navy, vice Delores M. Etter, resigned.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office
of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as
items nor covered by entries in the Digest of
Other White House Announcements.

Released April 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Sec-
retary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on the
President and Mrs. Bush's upcoming visit to
Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing
that the President signed S. 793

Released April 29

Fact sheet: 2008 National Volunteer Week

Released April 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Sec-
retary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing
that the President signed H.R. 1119

Released May 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy
Press Secretary Tony Fratto

Transcript of a press briefing by Office of
Management and Budget Deputy Director
Stephen S. McMillin, Council of Economic
Advisers Chairman Edward P. Lazear, and
Deputy National Security Adviser for Inter-
national Economic Affairs Daniel M. Price
on food aid

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by
President Martin Torrijos of the Republic of
Panama

Fact sheet: Leading the Fight Against Hun-
ger

Fact sheet: Advancing Freedom and Democ-
racy Around the World

Released May 2

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press
Secretary Tony Fratto

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary an-
nouncing that the President signed S. 2954

Fact sheet: Addressing Economic Pressures
Affecting American Families

Approved April 30

H.R. 1119 / Public Law 110–207
Purple Heart Family Equity Act of 2007

**Acts Approved
by the President**

Approved May 2

Approved April 28

S. 793 / Public Law 110–206
Traumatic Brain Injury Act of 2008

S. 2954 / Public Law 110–208
To amend Public Law 110–196 to provide
for a temporary extension of programs au-
thorized by the Farm Security and Rural In-
vestment Act of 2002 beyond May 2, 2008